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Shattered World

by

Ruth Lilienthal

1.

Why another “Holocaust” memoir? The last of those who lived through the nightmare are approaching the ends of their lives, and if one is to bear witness to one’s small corner of experience, it must be now. Although this memoir will be full of particulars about me, these details are important only insofar as they are representative of what many individuals experienced. My life has no *particular* significance, and it should be remembered that it is my voice that is heard only because those of the millions who were murdered, who perished in the prisons, on the transports, and in the camps, were silenced. They will not have the luxury of writing their memoirs.

This book will also bear witness to the many individuals, some Jews, some “Aryans,” who risked their liberty and their lives to save mine. Their motives were complex and various, but what they shared was the courage—perhaps it was foolhardiness—to help another human being.

I intend to write a straightforward account of my life up to the end of the war as I remember it. I reject completely all novelistic devices that strive to add an element of suspense to the narrative. Perhaps “straightforward” is not quite the right word. This will be rather a mosaic of fragments, all the bits and pieces of memory that have survived within me all these years. I survived the Hitler years in hiding in Germany. My life was often in danger. Running in parallel with my story are the stories of countless others in more or less similar circumstances who were more or less lucky or resourceful in obtaining assistance. A few survived. The majority perished. And so as a survivor I am merely a statistical anomaly. So here is my story and that of my family and acquaintances, events as they were told to me and as I remember them.

2.

My grandfather on my father’s side was named Heyman Lilienthal. He died when my father was just six years old. That would have been in 1894. His widow, my grandmother Cäcilie—her maiden name was Levy—was left with five children. My father was the youngest of the five, and I find it odd that he was the only one who wasn’t given an Old Testament name. The eldest was Johanna. She was the only girl. Then came Samuel, Saul, and Abraham. Last was my father, Herbert. I once saw a large picture of my grandfather Heyman at my uncle Samuel’s house, and I

noticed—though the face in the portrait wore a long beard—that I bore a certain resemblance to him.

My father's family had lived for many generations in Danzig, which at that time was part of Germany. My uncle Saul, who was forever doing research on the family as well as on local Jewish history, examined inscriptions in the Jewish cemetery in Danzig, and there he discovered that Lilienthals had been living in Danzig for over four hundred years.

Papa was born in Danzig. His mother, Cäcilie, came from somewhere in East Prussia. She was the daughter of a well-known and well-to-do rabbi and was one of twelve children—ten daughters and two sons. I did not learn this history from my father, who was never one to talk much about his family. Much of what I know about my family I learned from my Aunt Frieda, Uncle Abraham's wife, who died in 1984, in New York. Now I regret that I didn't ask her much more.

After my grandfather died, the family moved from Danzig to Leipzig, where they lived for some years. Later, the whole family moved to Berlin. Samuel and Saul were grown up and out of the house by then, both of them with wives and professions. The rest of the family lived in a modest apartment in the Mökernstrasse, a street that ran alongside the freight yards in a poor area of southwest Berlin. There were my grandmother Cäcilie; her sister, Tallah; the oldest daughter, Johanna, and her two daughters, Trude and Herta; and then Uncle Abraham; and lastly, Papa.

My grandmother Cäcilie was a very cheerful woman, from what I have heard, and my father was much attached to her. She died in 1918, about two years before I was born. It is a Jewish tradition that when a member of the family dies, the next to be born is given that person's name, and so I was given Cäcilie as my second name. Although my parents married after my grandmother's death, they had been going together for ten years, and during all that time my father never told his mother that my mother wasn't Jewish.

One of my father's brothers was very capable and a very good businessman, and it was chiefly he who supported the family. This was Uncle Samuel. He started out in business as a traveling representative for a coffin-fittings establishment in Berlin. His business was exclusively with non-Jews, since it is not a Jewish practice to have an open casket at a funeral. In Germany in particular, Jews preferred to be buried in a simple pine box. Later, Samuel started his own coffin-fittings company together with a partner; the firm was called "Lilienthal und Samuelsohn." He may even have owned his own factory.

Samuel died in Berlin in 1939, a year after my father. I believe he died a natural death. For more than ten years he and my father had not been on speaking terms, but the two had reconciled about a year before my father's death.

In the late thirties, perhaps it was 1938, Uncle Saul and his wife, Aunt Bertha, fled to Amsterdam to join their son Lebrecht and his wife, Julia, and their little girl. For a while they were safe in Amsterdam, but after the German occupation of Holland, they faced persecution as they had in Germany. In the early 1940s, they were interned at the Westerbork concentration camp, in Holland. From there they were sent first to Theresienstadt, I believe, and then to Auschwitz, or perhaps directly to Auschwitz. They all perished.

In 1923 there was a period of great inflation. My father was working as a pianist in hotels and restaurants at the time, and this was well-paid work. But he was paid only at the end of each week, or the end of the month, and by the time he would be paid, the money would be worthless. So he took his savings and with his brother Samuel's assistance opened a men's clothing store in Potsdam, which is not far from Berlin. At least now, if he sold something today, he would be paid today, and could run out and buy food. The next day, the next hour, the money might be worthless, but the price of a pair of trousers would be correspondingly that much more. It was immediate exchange. I don't know how long he had this store. Meanwhile, Papa also conducted a choir on the High Holidays, and that provided a good income.

One of Papa's nieces, Trude, sang in that choir, and it was there she met a man named Oskar Graumann, who was a Jew from Poland. They fell in love and married, and my father forever reproached himself that he had been in some way responsible for their meeting. My father did not like Oskar, though to a great extent his dislike may have been grounded in a general dislike for Polish Jews.

Such a negative attitude was typical among German Jews, who were for the most part quite assimilated into German society, while these Polish Jews, who came primarily from a lower social and economic stratum, embarrassed their more affluent and educated German counterparts, particularly with the Yiddish that these Eastern European Jews spoke—a medieval German mixed with Hebrew that sounded excruciating to an ear accustomed to High German. Many German Jews felt that all their efforts at assimilation, at having become respectable bourgeois Germans, were being undermined by these immigrants, and my father would sometimes make fun of the way they spoke. Many German Jews felt that the presence of Polish Jews in Germany contributed to a climate of anti-Semitism.

After the inflation had subsided, Uncle Samuel arranged with Papa that he sell his clothing store in Potsdam to Oskar. Payment was, alas, in the form of a promissory note. My father resumed his work as a pianist. One day Papa received a letter from Oskar informing him that he had sold the store in order to buy tickets to Palestine for himself and his wife. Eventually, my father learned that his brother Samuel had assisted Oskar in this project, and that angered him greatly. Though he believed that it was really his sister-in-law Julia who was behind these machinations, that by sending Oskar and Trude off to Palestine she had found a way of getting rid of one family member who was being supported by Samuel, Papa nonetheless blamed Samuel, and they did not speak to each other for over ten years. My mother had always hoped that the brothers would make up, and somehow this finally happened. My father died in 1938, so it must have been the year previous that the reconciliation occurred.

When my father died, which was on June 3, Uncle Samuel was the first to arrive at the house. I can still see my father, lying, dead, on the bed, and Uncle Samuel entering the room. He said, “Ah, I wish it were I who was lying there.” Samuel was facing ruin at the hands of the Nazis, who were confiscating Jewish businesses, all of which had to be liquidated by the end of December of that year. Many businesses were forcibly liquidated before that, especially profitable ones like Samuel’s. The Nazis would send prominent business owners to concentration camps, and then release them only if they agreed to sell their businesses for a nominal sum.

A year later, Samuel was dead. I had no contact with Aunt Julia after Samuel’s death. All I know—and this from Aunt Frieda—is that in the early forties she was ordered by letter to report for the next transport to the East for “resettlement.” Upon receiving this letter she hid in a cellar, but shortly thereafter she was caught. She was never heard of again.

3.

I know very little about my mother’s side of the family. It is a complex history and one I am not proud of. There are quite a few irregularities. One didn’t talk about such things, which really is a pity, because it is an interesting story despite everything. My mother’s maternal grandmother—my great-grandmother—was the daughter of a well-to-do landowner and farmer in Lower Bavaria. The family name was Hohenwarte. This great-grandmother ran off to Munich with one of the farm hands, a young man named Alois Rummelsberger, and there they married. They had three children, I believe, of whom my grandmother was the youngest; there were also two sons.

My grandmother, Wilhelmina Rummelsberger, was a strikingly beautiful girl. When she was still quite young, she hired herself out as a maid. She met a well-to-do bachelor named Wilhelm Bosse—a chemist, writer, inventor, and factory-owner. She lived with him on the Prinzregentenstrasse, in Munich, and it was he who became the father of my mother. When Wilhelmina became pregnant, she was sent to the Bavarian Alps, but she couldn't have remained there for the entire pregnancy, because I was told that my mother was born in Munich. Once, I asked my grandmother, "Why did you leave him?" and she replied, "He was a bachelor and was constantly being invited here and there, where he would be introduced to this or that woman as a possible wife, and I became very jealous." Wilhelm Bosse eventually married a Viennese actress.

My mother was born in 1892. She was named Sophie, a name she detested. She also hated the name Rummelsberger. When she became older she called herself Sonja and in her profession took the surname Hohènwarte. My grandmother was sixteen, I think, when her daughter was born. At that time, Germany contained many small principalities, and consequently there was a large minor nobility. There was also, of course, an aristocracy and a court in Berlin. From what I have heard, all these nobles lived quite extravagantly, and part of that extravagance consisted in the men keeping mistresses. And such a mistress is what my grandmother Wilhelmina became. She married, but it was a marriage on paper only. The husband was a certain Baron von Grabow, an impoverished noble who was, in fact, paid to marry her. She married him both for his name and for the opportunity it provided her to obtain introductions to the nobility.

Wilhelmina became the mistress of one of the princes of the royal house in Berlin. Her daughter, my mother, never lived with her. My mother lived with her grandmother, first in Munich and then in Stuttgart, or perhaps it was Mannheim, while my grandmother lived in Berlin. Somewhere I have a picture of this prince in uniform, inscribed "to my little doll." He wasn't the only one, I'm sure, and it probably didn't last long.

As a result of these liaisons, my grandmother eventually became quite well-to-do. To my mother she was cold and unloving. She resented having had a child at such an early age. When my grandmother became older, she did as many women in her situation did: She opened a "salon"—a very high-class salon, and very discreet—where wealthy men came, bankers, politicians, and the like. My grandmother had a large and elegant apartment in the Bavarian Quarter of Berlin, near the Bayerischer Platz, on Boznerstrasse.

In my childhood years I was at my grandmother's apartment quite often. One came into a large entrance hall, and the kitchen was on the left. There was a maid—a thin, hard-working little

woman named Minna. Then came my great-grandmother's room, with a crucifix on the wall. I stayed often in her room when I came to visit. When the doorbell would ring, I was not allowed to go into the hallway. And if I happened to be in the kitchen, then I was locked in the kitchen and was not allowed to go out. I never questioned these arrangements. Like most German children of that generation I was brought up to obey and not ask questions. If Grandma had a visitor and I was not to disturb her, then that was that.

Later, when I was older, and knew what was what, I wondered how my parents could have sent me there so often. Not that I ever noticed anything untoward or had any inkling of what was going on. After the kitchen there was a hallway that led into a boudoir and a bedroom. Right next to the bedroom was a large living room with an enormous sofa upholstered in red velvet, and a large grand piano. I saw the living room only at Christmas time, when the tree was there. There was also a dining room whose colors were all ivory and gold, with a large table in the center and a massive credenza against the wall. In the dining room was something of great attraction for me, a large vitrine filled with porcelain figures and china coffee sets. Everything was exquisite. The dining room opened onto a long porch, with flower boxes, a large table, and folding chairs. I spent much time on that porch when I was visiting.

My friend Eva, who was at my grandmother's once at the time when I was living in hiding and my grandmother was contributing food-ration coupons for me, has this recollection:

She lived right around the corner from the Kurfürstendamm. She had a small apartment—that was the “establishment.” I stepped into this apartment and it was a place the like of which I'd never been in before. It was very tasteful, but it was full of erotica. For instance, there was a little sculpture of Rodin's “The Kiss”—or perhaps it was a photograph, I don't remember. Then there was a little waiting room in red plush, and on the table a little ash tray with a china ballerina, but if you lifted the ballerina, her skirt would lift up and she would become a naked ballerina. You could see down the corridor through to a bedroom all in white. It was most intriguing.

I was always terribly bored when I visited my grandmother. I knew that if I was in the kitchen or on the balcony when the doorbell rang, then I was stuck there. And there was nothing to read but fashion magazines.

We went to my grandmother's every Sunday for dinner, which was a big affair. The dinner was always excellent—only the very best soups, meats, and cakes. But I was always terribly uncomfortable. My grandmother would complain about everything—the plates were too cold, or too hot. The food was too bland, or too spicy. I never saw my parents and my grandmother quarrel, but the atmosphere was always strained and oppressive. And we invariably stayed the entire afternoon.

I greatly preferred visiting my uncle Abraham. My mother would reproach me with, "Why do you always want to visit Uncle Abraham, and not Grandma. She does so much for you, and you're so ungrateful."

My parents knew about my grandmother's business, and Papa was uncomfortable about our having any connection with her at all. But my mother was very attached to her mother, though my grandmother was quite undemonstrative and unaffectionate toward her daughter. But Wilhelmina was a beautiful and elegant woman, always very beautifully and expensively dressed. And whenever she bought new clothes, which was often, she would give her castoffs to my mother, or else have something made for me out of the material. And we also obtained her used furniture, carpets, and suchlike when she bought new things for herself. One could say that in many ways she was a generous woman.

Here is another example of my grandmother's generosity. She was friendly with an artist—a painter—I can't remember his name. She would hang his paintings—landscapes—on the walls of her apartment, and often her clients, many of whom, as I have said, were quite wealthy, would buy these pictures. My mother told me this when I was grown up. She explained to me that the men, to assuage their feelings of guilt, would buy a painting to take home to their wives.

Or when I was sick, my mother would immediately call her mother, who would come from the Bayerischer Platz to the Innsbrucker Platz, which was perhaps a half-hour walk, with a bag full of oranges or some such delicacy for me. All in all I suppose that she didn't really love her daughter, and she was very critical of her, but she had a particular fondness for me, though I never felt the same for her. For me she was an emotional burden even before I knew that there was something not quite aboveboard about her. I also learned later that my father was afraid that I would take after my grandmother, and he became furious when she would buy or have made for me expensive clothes. He stood at the opposite pole: A girl, he maintained, needed two dresses: one to wear and one in the wash. He came from a poor family and was very thrifty, even spartan and puritanical. But he couldn't refuse my grandmother's gifts, on account of my mother.

It was unnatural for a child, who would rather play or read, to spend so much time at her grandmother's, confined to the porch or the kitchen. No, it was not a constructive influence. Often, I would have to travel with her when she wanted to get out of Berlin. We always went to nice hotels and restaurants. She was fond of saying, "As one gets older one has to surround oneself with young people." And I would say to myself, "Yes, and that makes the young people feel old." On other occasions my parents and I would journey with my grandmother to the Bavarian Alps, and when my father had to return to Berlin, my mother would go with him, leaving me alone with my grandmother. I was in the Bavarian Alps, in Obersdorf, with my grandmother and mother two summers in a row when I was about six or seven, and I have some happy memories from that time, but also some that were not so happy.

I remember a walk in the foothills. Along one path we came across a series of small shrines representing the stations of the cross. Seeing these caused me a great deal of pain. It was nightmarish, and the feeling was intensified because I knew that I was Jewish, and that it was Jews who were responsible for Christ's suffering. Another time, when I was about six years old, my mother, my grandmother, and I were in the middle of a large meadow. My grandmother conceived the idea that I should undress and be photographed naked in this meadow. I refused to undress, and I struggled against my grandmother's will while my mother did nothing to intervene. I was undressed and photographed. I was sure that if my father had been there, he would not have allowed this to happen.

Officially, my grandmother was a marriage broker. She advertised herself thus: Wilhelmina von Grabow, *Ehevermittlung*. But that was no more than a cover for her real business, and in 1937—she was over sixty by then—she was denounced to the authorities and arrested. This made quite a splash in the newspapers. Her earlier affair with the Hohenzollern prince came out. Her bank accounts were confiscated, and she was sentenced to several years in jail. While she was in prison, a lawyer named Dr. Fuchs, a Jew, visited her and offered to represent her. He managed to have her sentence reduced to only a year. After she came out of prison, my grandmother lived at first with my mother and me in the Pragerstrasse. But then she obtained her own apartment in the Kurfürstendamm, and eventually she returned to her old business.

It was while my grandmother was in prison that my father died. He had never liked her. I was already in America when my grandmother died, and in those intervening years she repeatedly wrote me reproachful letters, and though I had very little money in America—I was earning twenty dollars a week as a file clerk—I sent her five dollars every month. She spent her last years

in a Catholic old-age home, where she died. I cannot remember in what year she died. I know the dates of birth and death of everyone else in the family.

Having had this grandmother is one of the most painful things in my life. She was my only grandparent when I was young. It shames me to this day, not so much that she was the mistress of a prince, but that she was a procuress. She was not a vulgar person, and I never heard a curse from her or an off-color joke. But she was engaged in an immoral activity, and I feel that it has somehow diminished me. After the war, after I had lost everything, my grandmother sent me some pictures, and among them was that picture of me as a young girl, naked in the Alpine meadow. I destroyed it at once.

4.

Both of my parents were students at the Ochs–Eichelberg music conservatory—which disappeared long ago—where they were both studying piano. My father received a thorough education in music: In addition to piano, he studied music theory, composition, and music history. My mother studied only piano. Once they were asked to play together at a concert—a piece for piano four hands. And that is how they became acquainted, sitting side by side on the piano bench.

That was in 1908, when my mother was sixteen and my father twenty. My mother was not interested in a serious relationship, and this became a point of contention. She told me how they would walk in the *Tiergarten*, which is a large park in central Berlin, and they would walk for hours, discussing their relationship. Unable to reach accord, they did what most couples in their situation do: They broke up.

And so a period passed when my parents weren't seeing each other. During that time, the day when my mother took her piano lesson was changed. Three months went by, and one day she came out of her lesson and found my father waiting for her. It turned out that he had been waiting for her every week but had been showing up at her old lesson time, at the wrong time and on the wrong day. They then became reunited.

Several times my mother wanted to end the affair. I should mention that my father had a very explosive temper, though he wasn't physically violent. How they could quarrel! Once, after one of these quarrels, my mother wrote my father a letter, this time to break off the relationship once and for all. She walked out from her apartment to mail the letter. It was raining. And there was my father, standing by the mailbox in the rain. He said to her, "Well, you can give me that letter right away." She hadn't the heart to give it to him, and they made up once again.

Around 1913, my mother decided that she wished to study with the famous piano pedagogue Martin Krause. She arranged an audition with him, and he, impressed with her playing, expressed his willingness to accept her as his student. When she asked him his fee, he laughed and replied, "Child, you can't afford my fee. You just come for lessons, and that's that." As she was preparing to leave, Professor Krause opened the kitchen door, and said, "Claudio, come here." And out came a boy about ten years old. "Claudio, come and play something for us." The child sat at the piano and played a Bach toccata. His playing was remarkable, and all the while my mother felt herself sinking into the ground, with the thought, "If *children* here play like this!" She didn't know that this was the wunderkind Claudio Arrau. Arrau's mother had sent him from Chile to Berlin, where he lived with Professor Krause and his daughter, who took care of her father and the household. My mother studied for several years with Professor Krause.

During the First World War my father served as a soldier in the German army. He was twenty-six years old in 1914. He was caught in an attack, and as he was running, he fell into a trench. He lost consciousness and was found only twenty-four hours later. He had broken his thigh. His leg was put in a cast, and afterwards, when the cast was removed, it became apparent that the leg had not been set properly. So the doctor broke the leg again and reset it, all this without anesthesia. After all this breaking and mending, the injured leg ended up four inches shorter than the other one. My father returned from the war on crutches. He was very disheartened, and he began to withdraw from my mother. She didn't know what had happened, so she went to his mother, who told her, "He believes that because he has become a cripple, you, a young and beautiful woman, would be better off not tied to him." My mother told him that his injured leg made no difference to her.

My father was a small man, with features that were considered typically Jewish. My mother, who was not Jewish, was taller, with dark eyes and eyebrows but with long, gold-blond hair. Once—this was before the war—as they were walking in the *Tiergarten*, a man passing by spat at my father. They were no strangers, of course, to anti-Semitism. Here were a Christian and a Jew walking arm in arm. This incident, my mother told me, had been particularly painful for my father.

From childhood on, my mother had cherished the hope of becoming a concert pianist, as had my father. Marriage did not figure in either of their plans. A love affair, however, was something else. My parents had been going together for over ten years. During all that time my father had no money, and he still lived with his mother. After his conservatory studies had ended, he had continued to study piano with Egon Petri and Konrad Ansorge, both very well known pianists at

that time. All my father's musical studies had been paid for by his older brother Samuel. During the years before his marriage, my father was practicing piano six to eight hours a day. He and my mother saw each other every day, or if they could not see each other, they wrote long letters.

In the fall of 1919 my mother suspected that she was pregnant. She and my father went together to a physician. My father waited downstairs while my mother went up to the consulting room. My mother returned with the news that she was indeed pregnant. My father then said that they must marry. But my mother replied, "How can we get married? You have no income." He replied that he would earn a living playing piano in a hotel. At that time all the big hotel restaurants featured a small orchestra or a pianist. The work was very well paid, but it was considered beneath a serious musician. Nonetheless, my father began working, and he and my mother married on 14 November 1919. It was a small, quiet wedding. My mother later told me that she cried the whole day. It was the end of all her hopes. Her dreams of becoming a pianist were over, and my father's as well—he would become a hotel pianist.

My mother had been a Lutheran, because that was her father's religion, though her mother and grandmother were Catholic. And because she had lived with her grandmother, she always went to the Catholic church, to which she felt very much drawn. But she was officially Protestant, and at age fifteen she had been confirmed in the Lutheran Church. But before she married my father, my uncle insisted that she become Jewish, and she agreed to this. This was no trifling matter, because according to Jewish law, the mother's religion determines that of the child.

For a while after my parents' wedding my great-grandmother—my mother's mother's mother—lived with my parents, but she wasn't happy there. I don't think she was particularly fond of my father. She was a religious Catholic and undoubtedly not at all pleased that her granddaughter had married a Jew. I must say, however, that she never made any remarks about this in my presence. In any case, in winter it became too cold for my great-grandmother, for we lived in a cold-water flat with no central heating, each room being heated by a small coal stove. So my grandmother took her mother to live with her, and there she remained for the remaining fifteen years of her life, until she died in about 1927 at age eighty-six.

My father hid the fact that he was playing in hotels. He did not want to be looked upon as unfit for a serious pianistic career. Both of my parents were unhappy. They took a three-room apartment in the Bennigsenstrasse—number 20. Three rooms, a kitchen, and a maid's room.

One day, not long after the wedding, my mother was visiting her mother, who was very upset at the news of her daughter's pregnancy. "I'm too young to be a grandmother," she cried. After the

visit, my mother left my grandmother's apartment and sat on the stairway outside, crying. Her maid was with her, and as they walked homeward past the Bayerischer Platz, my mother began to bleed, and she was taken to a hospital. She had suffered a miscarriage, and so after a religious conversion and a marriage that had occurred on its behalf, there was to be no baby. An aftereffect of the miscarriage was that no one outside the immediate family understood why the wedding had been so small and quiet. My aunt, with whom I sometimes used to talk here in America after my parents were long dead, once said to me, "We never understood why there wasn't a big wedding." I did not tell her about my mother's pregnancy.

My mother lost a lot of blood, and she remained in hospital for a time. Afterwards, she went through a deep depression. She consulted a physician and was told that there was nothing wrong with her. She complained that she was weak, that she had lost so much blood, but he insisted that what she really needed was to have a child to replace the one she had lost, which is just what a doctor would have said at that time. You could say, then, that this doctor is to blame for my having been born, since neither of my parents wanted a child. They hadn't even wanted to get married. But the doctor had spoken, and since my parents had, after all, married on account of a child, they decided that they may as well go ahead and have one.

5.

The time came for me to be born, and I arrived with great difficulty. Our apartment was on the fourth floor, right under the roof. A midwife had been summoned. The maid was downstairs, waiting for the doctor. She had to wait downstairs because at eight o'clock all the outside doors to the houses were locked. Then a scream issued from the fourth floor so loud that the maid heard it all the way downstairs. Finally, the doctor arrived. After a long labor, he declared that he would have to use forceps if the child didn't come soon. But shortly thereafter, I came out on my own. I was born at quarter to seven on the morning of 1 December 1920.

I was blue and wouldn't start breathing. The doctor and the midwife swung me around in turn and spanked me, throwing me up and down trying to clear my air passages. After about ten minutes, I finally started to cry. After I was washed and diapered, the doctor, who was a great music-lover, turned to my father and said, "Now that I have done my job, it is time for you to do yours. Play." And my father sat at the piano and played the "Moonlight" Sonata. My mother recorded these events in a diary that she was keeping at that time. She also wrote that I cried a great deal those first days.

I lay in a baby carriage when I was an infant, and the carriage stood beside the piano. This, too, is something my mother wrote in her diary. She wrote of her hopes that I would come to love the piano. She hoped that I would become a wunderkind—but in that I disappointed her.

My father was more articulate and intellectual than my mother, while she was more emotional. My mother had been very religious, but my father talked her out of her religious feelings and thereby took something important away from her. Papa had himself been very religious when he was young. However, he had become cynical about religion. He would say that religion was a business like any other. I don't know what caused this change of heart. My father did not reveal much about his internal life. He could explain things well, and he read widely. But he would not talk readily about matters of the heart.

There is a family story that has come down to me. On Passover, one is not supposed to eat bread, or anything made of flour, except matzoth. Once, during Passover—my father must have been about sixteen—he and his brothers were walking in the *Tiergarten*. The brothers wanted to go to a *Konditorei* for some cake and coffee, but my father objected, stating that it was Passover and that the prohibition against bread should be respected. Nonetheless, the brothers entered the *Konditorei*, and my father went home.

During the first years of his marriage my father gave several piano recitals. I believe that my grandmother helped financially in this enterprise. He had given some small recitals earlier, but now he was to play in an important hall—the *Singakademie*—or perhaps it was the *Bechsteinsaal*. This was a way for him to get reviewed, and these recitals were a big event in the life of our family. My father insisted that I attend, even though I was only three or four years old. When my father was asked why he had brought such a small child along, he would reply, “I have my reasons.” So he, too, it seems, had hopes that I would become a pianist, or at any rate a musician. As a result of these recitals my father became somewhat known in musical circles. He still kept secret that he was playing in restaurants.

After her marriage, my mother gave up her pianistic ambitions. She wrote to Professor Krause that she would no longer be taking lessons with him, to which he responded with a postcard, stating that she was foolish to give up the piano and that he expected her at the usual time the following week. But pursuing a pianistic career wasn't something one did as a married woman, and that was that. She was very unhappy about giving up her ambitions and remained full of resentment. Much later, when I was grown up, my mother told me with considerable bitterness how my father's family always would ask him to play when the family got together, but no one

ever wanted to hear her. Now she no longer practiced so intently. But she had a beautiful contralto voice, and she soon began taking voice lessons.

When I was very young my father worked evenings playing in restaurants and hotels, as I have said. He played from eight in the evening until after one o'clock in the morning. He used to tell my mother how he hated this work, that he was doing it for her. He hated the atmosphere in these restaurants—this was, after all, the 1920s, the era of Berlin's famous frivolity. At the same time, he began to build up a roster of piano students, and over time my father gained a reputation as an independent music teacher.

In order to teach music in Germany one had to pass exams and be licensed by the state, in this case by the *Schulrat*—the official government agency that oversaw schoolteachers and music instructors. In particular, to be licensed as a piano teacher one had to pass exams not only in piano, but also in music history, theory, and counterpoint. My father became the only private teacher in Berlin permitted to prepare students for these examinations. Ordinarily, it was the conservatories that prepared students for these examinations. On Sunday mornings he would hold his music history classes, and from a very early age, maybe four or five, I would sit in. I was always anxious to learn. I also studied music theory, but that was later.

My parents began my music instruction when I was quite young. I remember how my father would play a note on the piano and then ask me to sing an interval of, say, a minor third or a perfect fourth, above or below it. When I was four years old my mother taught me to play all the scales in the sharp keys, and for my father's birthday, on the fourth of August, I played these scales for him. My mother had to put three pillows on the piano bench so I could reach the keys. But I didn't start regular piano lessons until I was about six years old. All I remember now is large sheets of music for learning the names of the notes on the staff. F–A–C–E was for the spaces: "*Fritz aß Citronen-Eis.*" For the lines, E–G–H–D–F, it was, "*Es geht hurtig durch Fleiss.*" And there were pictures that went with it—I remember a rooster. I wonder what he was doing there.

Although my father was a good parent in many ways, I was useless to him when I was very young. As my mother later told me, he would say, "She's much too little. She doesn't understand anything. You can't talk to her." I became interesting to him only after I could understand him and he could talk to me. Then he could explain things to me, and that he did beautifully, and very patiently. I was very proud of him, because he was a musician and gave concerts. I trusted his judgment absolutely. Papa knew everything. But my father, indeed both my parents, had terrible tempers. They would shout at each other or at me, and I was completely intimidated by them. But

in spite of his temper, he was kind and generous, much more so than my mother. My mother was very emotional and effusive, and the more effusive she was, the more I crawled into myself.

My parents were terribly strict with me. I recall Papa saying, “And even if I should get you out of bed in the middle of the night, you must be able to play this piece perfectly.” And at that time I was still very small. My mother taught me piano, not my father, because she wanted to be my teacher. My father, in contrast to my mother, was very patient with his students, and they adored him. I remember one of my father’s students saying to my mother, “Your husband has such heavenly patience.” She looked at him quizzically: He didn’t have heavenly patience with his family! My mother wasn’t at all patient. She would hit me whenever I made a mistake, and I would cry. I had to practice piano two hours a day, starting when I was six years old. I would sometimes sit at the piano and cry, with the tears running down my face. On top of everything, my father would hear every wrong note I played, and he would call out from the next room, “Don’t play F sharp, it’s F natural!” It was torment.

I enjoyed music, however, and I enjoyed the time with my father. I could learn more easily from my father than from my mother. When I was a little older and my father had his opera school, we had a game: He would play a piece on the piano—a couple of bars—and I had to tell him what it was. I enjoyed this, and I was very good at it. As for playing, I enjoyed it less and less as I grew older. When I was seven I played for the first time in my father’s student recital. My name appeared in the program, and beside it there was an asterisk, with the notation that I was a student of Sonja Lilienthal. I played “*Für Elise*,” by Beethoven—a piece that all beginning students play—and something by Mozart.

My mother was taking voice lessons at the time with a very well known teacher, Max Marschalk. Aside from being a voice teacher, he was the music critic of the *Vossische Zeitung*, one of the leading newspapers in Berlin. He was quite wealthy and was a friend of Furtwängler and other prominent musicians. His wife, I think, was the sister of the wife of the writer Gerhart Hauptmann. I always accompanied my mother to her voice lessons with Herr Marschalk. He came to the first student concert where I played and afterwards said to my mother, “She has a nice touch.”

Until 1933, we always had a maid living with us. I particularly remember only one. She was Polish, and her name was Pelagia; I don’t remember her last name; in the household, maids had only first names. She was Catholic, and I remember one day, around Eastertime, I think it was Good Friday, I must have been four or five, I was in the kitchen with her; my parents weren’t

home. She had taken out some large pictures of the Crucifixion. She showed them to me, and told me that it was the Jews who had crucified Christ. I was kneeling on the kitchen floor looking at the pictures, and of course I knew I was a Jew. I was horrified; I cried, and I was terribly unhappy that it was Jews who had done the horrible things displayed in those pictures. When my parents came home, I told them about what I had seen and heard, and my father became angry. Yet Pelagia remained with us for quite a few years. My parents often went out, leaving me alone with the maid. Once there was a thunderstorm, and Pelagia told me that every time it thunders, a house falls down. I was terrified, and I became very frightened of thunderstorms. At night I would crawl into my parents' bedroom, on my father's side. I felt safe when I was with him. He would say, "I'm just allowing it to thunder, that's all." He gave the impression that he was indestructible, that he was in complete control of every situation.

My parents would get into terrible quarrels, with each other and with me. But there was also much humor and warmth at home. I somehow adjusted and tried to be a model child. My parents were musicians with artistic temperaments, and with no idea how to bring up a child. They had completely unrealistic expectations. They were very strict with me, and expected absolute perfection. At a very early age I had to wash the dishes, and every Saturday I had to polish the brass door-handles and dust the apartment.

When the time came for me to go to school, it was impressed on me how important education was, and that only the best was expected of me. The teachers at school were also very strict. When I was about nine years old, my teacher told my parents at an interview that I didn't get along well with the other children. My parents then took my Christmas gifts away from me. I had received a set of little houses with which you could construct a village. My parents took away those little houses, and I never saw them again.

We always celebrated Christmas, which was typical in mixed marriages, even though my mother had converted to Judaism. My father was always irritable around Christmastime, annoyed that he had given in to my mother in the matter of Christmas. Nonetheless, he entered into the spirit of gift-giving and even acted the part of Father Christmas. When I was small, on Christmas Eve I would remain in the living room; everything was dark. I had to wait, and then I would hear big, heavy steps coming up the stairs and going into the music room, where the Christmas tree stood, which I wasn't supposed to see. Into the room came the steps and then out again. The steps belonged to my father, of course, though I didn't realize this at the time. I began to suspect it only as I got a little older.

Afterwards came the giving of gifts. A bell was rung, the door opened, and there stood the beautifully decorated Christmas tree, alight with burning candles. And now I was allowed to enter the room. The gifts were under the tree, but I was not yet allowed to look at them. First, I had to recite a poem, a poem I had learned at school and then had written in my best handwriting on a sheet of writing paper. I had decorated the poem with drawings of pine cones and tree ornaments. I read the poem, and then I gave it to my parents as a gift.

We also celebrated Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but none of the other Jewish Holidays. This was the only time in the year when my father would light the Sabbath candles. On Yom Kippur we would have a large white candle that would burn for twenty-four hours. It was in memory of his mother. Occasionally, we went to a Passover seder at the home of one of my uncles and aunts. Rosh Hashanah was very important in my life as a child. On the High Holy Days my father conducted a choir. In Berlin there were several synagogues, but there were so many Jews who attended synagogue only on the High Holy Days that auxiliary halls were set up. Thus, a hall would be rented and turned into a synagogue. On the stage stood a half-circle of fir trees, and hidden behind the trees were the harmonium and the choir. Every year my father was engaged by one of these makeshift synagogues to play the harmonium and conduct the choir. The rehearsals began even in the summer. Since my parents took me everywhere with them, I went to the rehearsals, and then to the High Holy Day services, which went on for hours, and on Yom Kippur it was all day, except for a break of two hours for silent prayer, during which the choir didn't sing. I took it all very seriously, and I always sat very quietly. I listened to the rabbi and to the choir and the cantor. On the first evening of Rosh Hashanah we always had a very festive meal, and then my father would light the candles and say the blessing.

My mother and I would always get new clothes for Rosh Hashanah. My father's work for the High Holy Days paid very well, and this was the only substantial income my parents could regularly count on. A seamstress would come for a couple of days before Rosh Hashanah to do mending and sew clothes for my mother, and also for me. She came every year during my childhood. She was the same seamstress that sewed for my grandmother.

My mother couldn't tell me much about Judaism, of course. She prayed with me at night before I fell asleep, and only much later did I learn that the prayer we said together was actually a Christian prayer, from which she omitted the part that mentioned Jesus. But it really made no difference to me. I prayed to God the Fatherly Being.

My father explained to me about the High Holy Days, especially how between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur you have to make up with everyone you've quarreled with over the year and search your soul of what you have done wrong. I remember that I would make up with children in our building with whom I had quarreled. My father told me that religious Jews believe that God has a big book into which all your deeds throughout the year have been written, and on Yom Kippur God decides whether you will be allowed to live another year.

In the synagogue, above the altar, there hangs a red light, called the Eternal Light. My father explained to me that this Eternal Light is a symbol of God's presence, that this light is never allowed to go out. I remember that as a child every time I passed by a synagogue, I felt a longing to go in, to make sure that the Eternal Light was still burning.

6.

I turned six in December 1926, and since the school year began after Easter, I began school in the spring of 1927. We were still living at Bennigsenstrasse 20, in Berlin Schöneberg–Friedenau, where I had been born and where I lived until I was thirteen. The house in Bennigsenstrasse is still standing. In 1933 we moved to Pragerstrasse, which is where I lived until I went into hiding, which was almost ten years later, at the end of 1942. That house was destroyed in the war. My mother lived in the Pragerstrasse apartment until her death, on 27 July 1943.

But let us return to 1927. There was a primary school close by, but my parents did not want me to attend that school, because our neighborhood was inhabited in large part by lower-echelon government workers, whom my father considered particularly anti-Semitic. So my parents enrolled me instead in a primary school on Offenbacherstrasse: Public School Number 19. This school was about a forty-minute walk from home, but at least the Offenbacherstrasse school was located in an area with a more educated population, people my parents felt to be more congenial. In the beginning, my father accompanied me each morning to school, and I very much enjoyed walking with him. My mother would pick me up at noon. Later, when I was older, I walked alone.

The school day began at eight o'clock in the morning and ended at about one. I liked school. I was a very good student and learned with great enthusiasm. And my teachers liked me. In addition to the primary classroom teacher, there were supplementary teachers. One of them, I recall, was a Fräulein Fernbach. I think she taught math. I remember a lesson from her about how to manage a bank account. She explained how we should put money aside in the bank so that we could live from our savings, and not from day to day. I remember sitting and thinking, "My parents don't live

so much from day to day as from moment to moment!" I don't think my parents ever had a bank account. I was very poor in gymnastics, and unfortunately, we had an hour of it every day. I am not a courageous person.

Every morning during Advent the teacher would light a candle and we would sing an Advent song. There was no prayer as such in school. I wasn't supposed to sing the Advent song, though of course, I would have liked to. There were perhaps one or two other Jewish children in the class. In high school, which I attended in Schöneberg, there were many more Jewish children. But the primary school was located more toward the outskirts of Berlin, where there were fewer Jews. But during the four years I attended this school I didn't experience any anti-Semitism.

My parents were concerned with my education, and they visited with my teacher on occasion, which was not a usual thing in those days. Whenever my father gave a concert, he would give my teacher tickets.

I had one teacher, Fräulein Bublitz was her name, for several years. She was the gym teacher and also the handicrafts teacher. She was the cause of a rather traumatic experience for me. One day she announced in our handicrafts class that we were going to begin a project to knit a bag for marbles. She instructed us to have our parents obtain a certain amount of yarn for us, and we were to wind it into a ball. I could not have been more than six or seven years old at the time. I took the skein of yarn, but somehow I got the idea that to get at the beginning of the yarn, to roll it up, I should cut through the whole side of the skein, which I did, leaving me with a large number of pieces of yarn each a little more than a foot long. What was I to do? I wound the lengths of yarn into a ball one after another. The yarn, I recall, was red.

At the start of class the next day the teacher prepared to demonstrate how to knit. Unfortunately, she selected my ball of yarn for her demonstration. I sat mute in my place. Frau Bublitz began to knit, and very soon the yarn came to an end. Undaunted, she began again, but again the yarn ran out. I was terribly embarrassed, and I sat there silently, not knowing what would happen next. When the yarn came to a premature end yet again, Fräulein Bublitz became very angry, and she slapped me in the face.

At home I told my father what had occurred. A teacher was not allowed to hit a child, and my father told me that he was going to complain about the incident. He was acquainted with the superintendent of schools, who was also the supervisor of private music teachers. I told some of my classmates that my father was going to complain to the authorities, and word got back to Frau

Bublitz. She spoke to me, saying that she was sure I didn't want her to lose her job. Of course, I didn't want that, and in the end, my father took no action.

Handicrafts was not one of my favorite subjects; nor was gymnastics. I liked all the other subjects, especially history. I was not as good in mathematics as I was in German and history, particularly because in mathematics there was a great emphasis on mental calculation, and I was not particularly adept at this.

When I was eight or nine years old I had a terrible accident. It was on Rosh Hashanah, and we were returning from services where my father had conducted the choir. We were changing trains at Alexanderplatz, which was an enormous station, with several levels of tracks. We stood waiting on the platform, and soon a train pulled up. My parents stepped into the subway car and sat down. It was the last car on the train. I put my foot on the metal step and slipped. My right foot fell into a large gap between the train and the platform. I tried to extricate it, but I slipped in even further. Now I was lying on the platform with my entire right leg caught between the platform and the car. Then I felt electricity going through me. I couldn't move, nor could I cry out. I felt the current increase. Finally, I was able to make a small sound, and my mother heard it. She ran to the door of the car. A commotion ensued, and the electricity was turned off; but no one dared to touch me with eight hundred volts of electricity going through me. Then two railway workers managed to pull me out. They carried me to a small room in the station. I was wearing black patent-leather shoes and white socks. I saw that there was a gaping hole in my sock that went deep into the flesh of my Achilles tendon.

We got back into the subway car and returned home. I was put right to bed. My parents called our family doctor, Dr. Bonin, who lived in our street. He was not at home, so they called another doctor whom they knew. He was a dermatologist, but a friend of the family. Dr. Pohl, the dermatologist, decided that I was in terrible danger, and he called the fire department. A fire engine arrived, and several firemen tramped up the four flights of stairs to our apartment. Eventually, Dr. Bonin came and examined my foot. I couldn't walk, and I remained in bed for about a month until my foot healed. Afterwards, I had to learn to walk again. I still have a scar. I was told that an adult would have died immediately, but that in a child's body there isn't the level of resistance that would result in the internal organs being destroyed. On the same day, in the same place, a man died in a similar accident.

My parents filed suit against the AEG—the *Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft*—the company that ran public transportation in Berlin. The AEG was required to pay my parents two

thousand marks and to send me for four weeks that winter to a children's sanatorium in the Hartz mountains. I believe that this accident had a permanent effect on my nervous system. Afterwards, I had more difficulty with the other children at school and more difficulty concentrating.

Nonetheless, I was very conscientious in my schoolwork, and I think that as a result I was not very much liked. The sought-after children were, of course, the ones accomplished in sports. There was a great emphasis on sports at school. In gymnastics class we were required to run up and down ladders that ran up the walls. Certain exercises we had to do made me dizzy, and sometimes I even fainted.

I had been a healthy child. There were years when I didn't miss a day of school except for the usual childhood diseases. My father believed in homeopathy, and also in the Kneipp water cure. When I was sick my parents would call a doctor only if I had a high fever. Otherwise, my father gave me homeopathic pills to swallow. And I had to sweat, which was quite a production: My mother would lay a sheet of heavy gutta-percha on the bed, and then she would place some thick flannel on top of it. Then a towel soaked in cold water. I would have to lie down on this, a most unpleasant feeling when your body is hot. I was completely wrapped up in this confection, and then the whole apparatus was fastened with safety pins. My parents would then proceed to put two or three feather beds on top of me, and now I had to sweat.

My mother also gave this treatment to my father, though he was rarely sick. Then he would groan and shout, "It's too cold! It's too cold!" But when I had to undergo the sweat cure I didn't say a word, and my mother would say, "How brave Ruth is!" I was much praised for my stoicism.

In retrospect, my parents' views on health constituted an odd mixture. My father loved to eat meat: Without meat a meal wasn't a meal. On the other hand, we would eat dried bananas—or perhaps fresh bananas—cut up on bread, with butter, of course. My father would go with me to the health-food store. Butter, it was thought, was good for you. My mother would say to me, "You have to put some meat on your bones." Since a result of getting sick was that you would lose weight, it was thought good to be somewhat well-upholstered beforehand, so you wouldn't become too thin. Plenty of butter, plenty of milk and cream, plenty of cheese. My parents did not economize on food. No margarine ever came into our house, nor boxes of pudding mix. Puddings and cakes were all made from scratch, all by my mother, who was a good cook and proud of her prowess in the kitchen, though otherwise she was not a good housekeeper, a trait that I have inherited.

My mother had a foolish and destructive habit of praising my girlfriends in comparison to me. “Why can’t you be like so and so?” was a continual refrain. In those years I had a girlfriend who lived across the street. Her name was Gertrud Holzhausen. And when Gertrud finally moved away, the last evening, when I visited her to say good-bye, I said, “You know, I would have liked you much better if my mother hadn’t always held you up to me as an example.”

There were three boys living in our building. There were no girls. One boy with whom I used to play was named Werner Lenschner. We often played outside. When we played house, he would be the father, and I would be the mother with my dolls. One day he attacked me and beat me. I came crying to my father. He was furious with me. “What? You let yourself be beaten up? And you didn’t hit back?” No, I didn’t hit back. He said, “If this ever happens again, and you don’t defend yourself, then don’t come crying to me. If you do, I’ll give you a beating.” So next time Werner hit me, I hit back. And I hit him so well that his mother complained to my father, who said, “I told my daughter to defend herself.” But I wasn’t by nature a child who would hit someone or defend myself. My contact with other children was limited. I was an only child, and I grew up mostly among adults. I felt different from other children. I was introspective and used to playing by myself. I would sit alone on the carpet and play, and when I was older, I sat and read. Other than Gertrud, there were no other girls in the neighborhood.

Our doctor, Doctor Bonin, who was Jewish, had married a French woman whom he had met during the First World War. After the war he returned to France, married her, and brought her and her mother to Berlin. They had a large crucifix in their living room, which infuriated my father. “The women rule the roost,” he would say. Dr. Bonin’s wife was a small, pretty woman, and they had two children, Mimi and Jean, and I played with them. They had all sorts of playthings, as they were quite well-to-do. Their house was like a toy store. Dr. Bonin was our family doctor until he emigrated with his family to Chicago, sometime after 1939.

I had one other girlfriend. Her name was Nora Weihrauch. She was already my friend in grade school, and again in high school, even after we moved to Schöneberg. Nora was also Jewish. She came from Poland, I think—from the East, in any case. She had two younger brothers, who were twins. She was a good friend, and this friendship lasted even after I had to leave school. Her parents were well off. Her father was some kind of businessman. Nora wanted to become an actress. She had always been fascinated by the movies, and she could talk for hours about them. She took some acting classes, but her father was very much opposed to this. The last I remember of her is that I met her somewhere, and she told me that she was taking acting lessons. I believe

that she and her parents emigrated to Vienna. That must have been before Hitler took over Austria, which was in 1938. I left school in 1935. So it must have been in 1935 or 1936 that they emigrated. I have no idea what happened to them after that, whether they were able to emigrate or somehow to save themselves, or whether they perished.

7.

My mother taught piano and accordion. She had taught music as a young woman and during the early years of her marriage, in the years before the advent of the *Reichsmusikkammer* (Association of Musicians of the Reich), which came into existence only in 1933, after Hitler's accession to power. My father became a member of the *Reichsmusikkammer* and remained a member until 1935. In September of that year he received a letter, signed by one Peter Raabe, an official of the *Reichsmusikkammer*, informing him that effective immediately he was no longer allowed to teach music to "Aryan" students. My father was a teacher of piano, and he also ran an opera school, where he coached singers and performed operas, and this decree signaled the end of the opera school, for in 1935 Jewish students in Berlin were certainly not studying to become opera singers. They would not be taking vocal coaching or piano lessons any longer. In Germany Jews had no future.

This was the *Verbot*, the prohibition, the great dividing line in our family. Time was henceforth reckoned as before or after the *Verbot*. That my father was no longer able to teach was hard on all of us. For me, the result was that I was immediately taken out of high school. High school was not free. It cost twenty marks a month. Because I was a very good student, I had had a scholarship. But this scholarship had been suspended in 1933, as it had been for all Jewish students. Jewish students thenceforth had to pay for high school regardless of academic ability or financial need.

I was crushed at having to leave high school. I said good-bye to all my teachers, and then I went home and cried. I thought my life was over. For a while my parents considered enrolling me in a Jewish school. But these were expensive private schools, and I would need a scholarship. And so my father applied to an organization called *Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, of which he was a member. This was an organization of Jewish men who had fought in World War I. However, the application was rejected, perhaps because they knew that my mother was not Jewish. She had converted to Judaism, but according to the racial laws she wasn't considered Jewish, since she didn't come from a Jewish family.

I remember an incident around the time of the *Verbot*. One of my father's students was named Lichtenstein. She had a brother who was a flutist, and I know that he managed to get to America. What became of her I do not know. Her parents were very wealthy. They had a house like a castle outside of Berlin. My parents were sometimes invited there to parties. When I was a teenager, sometimes I was also allowed to go. After the *Verbot*, the father of this student sent us a goose for Rosh Hashana and material for winter coats for my mother and me. I was sent there by my parents with flowers to thank them. I was terribly embarrassed at our poverty. I was wearing that winter coat when I went into hiding.

I was at home. My father was upset about having lost his livelihood. My mother was also upset. In order to make ends meet, we rented out a few more rooms in our large apartment. My mother, who was a very good cook, took in boarders for lunch, which at that time in Germany was the main meal of the day. Some of those who rented a room also took their meal, and there were one or two who lived elsewhere but who ate lunch with us. In this way we were able to pay for our own meals. These latter were older individuals who could no longer cook and so came to our *Mittagstisch*. In addition, once a month, or once a week, I forget, we went somewhere and picked up a bag of canned goods. I would go there with my father, and I felt humiliated walking through the streets, certain that my school friends would know that I was a charity case.

My father was trying to find a way to continue with his Jewish students. He was attempting to start some kind of cooperative with the more advanced students—those who already had some training as singers. He performed operettas with them. I remember one operetta—something to do with Japan—in which I had a small role, singing and dancing. I was a teenager then, perhaps sixteen years old, dressed in a kimono.

My father was not very successful with his cooperative. One of my father's students was a Dutch woman named Hilda van Groh. Her father was the ambassador from Holland, stationed in Berlin. This *Fräulein* van Groh was a tall, blond woman, with a soprano voice. She spoke with her father about what had happened to my father and his opera studio—the *Berliner Opernstudio*, it was called. Herr van Groh contacted someone at the Interior Ministry and became active in trying to have the prohibition against my father's teaching lifted. After a while, he achieved success. Some government official—not from the *Reichsmusikkammer*, but from the Interior Ministry—wrote a letter to my father notifying him that he was permitted to continue to teach “Aryan” students.

That must have been sometime in 1936. But my father never again had the kind of opera school he had had before. Earlier, there had been rehearsals and performances, and house concerts at least one a month in our apartment, which had very large front rooms connected by sliding doors to create a room that held over one hundred people. There were no more house concerts, nor did my father ever again put on an opera. Each season he used to put on one or two performances in costume, with a small orchestra and chorus—*Tsar und Zimmermann* by Lortzing, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*. That all was over. But at least he was able to teach a few private students. He had to be circumspect, even though he had a letter from the government. He realized that there would be other governmental organs that would oppose him.

I was terribly unhappy at being at home. My parents would say, “Wait, one of these days Hitler will be thrown out. Just wait another few months, or half a year.” But I had heard that too often, starting on 31 January 1933, when Hitler came to power. I was twelve years old then, and from that time on, wherever Jewish people gathered, or non-Jewish people who were opposed to Hitler, who condemned his ideas and behavior, they would say, “It will be over soon. I’ve heard this or that from this or that ministry. There aren’t enough raw materials, or foreign exchange.” At first you hoped from one season to the next, but finally you no longer believed that it would ever end. I remember talking in school with another Jewish girl. I said to her, “Tell me, do your parents also sit together saying that it will be only another few months, and then Hitler will be thrown out?” “Yes,” she said, “My parents do the same thing.” And this is how people kept up their hope. “Soon, soon, very soon.” But it never came to that until much, much later. We had hoped that Hitler would have been thrown not through foreign intervention and a war, but through the will of the German people themselves.

One day in November or December 1935 I said to my parents, “I want to learn shorthand and typing.” These were not subjects taught in high school. High school in Germany offered a classical education, both for girls and boys. “I want to learn secretarial skills and then find a job. I can’t stand sitting home any longer.” My grandmother paid for me to go to a trade school, a *Handelsschule*. She was willing to pay for the business school because it was only for three months. It was the same school my mother had gone to. There I had classes six or seven hours every day. I studied typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, and business math. I was very good in typing. I could type very accurately and very fast. I even won a prize for typing. As a child I had played the piano so much that I had strength and control in my fingers. I started in January 1936 and finished in April of that year. At that time there was no prohibition against Jews going to

school. That was to come one or two years later. I finished in April, and by then there was already an *Arbeitsamt*—employment office—for Jews, because Jews could no longer be employed by “Aryans.” So the only possibility was for me to work for a Jewish firm. I went to the employment office for Jews, and I found a job with a man, I think his name was Goldstein, whose profession was the importation of live chickens from Yugoslavia. My job was to sit in a hotel room close to the general marketplace where all the food came into Berlin and type letters he dictated, take shorthand and answer telephone calls. It was a terrible neighborhood, and I hated it. It was ugly and dirty, and I had to go there every day. I had never been in such a neighborhood in my life. It was in one of the worst parts of Berlin. There wasn’t much work, and so most of the day I just sat. I wrote one or two letters and took one or two telephone calls. This Mr. Goldstein was always sitting at my back. I didn’t trust him and felt insecure. I asked my father to pick me up in the evening so he would see that I had a father.

I decided to find another job. I was uncomfortable, and I also was unhappy at not having much work. I felt useless. After two months with Herr Goldstein I left. I found a job in my neighborhood with a man who owned real estate and who managed real estate for others. I kept the books for him. I worked overtime every day, without extra pay. When the rents came in from the many apartments we managed there was plenty of work. But after two months I moved to another job.

A man who sang in my father’s choir worked for a large life insurance company, the Isar Lebensversicherung. It had a division completely staffed by Jews whose sole business was small policies such as burial insurance. It was a small office completely by itself, with perhaps six or eight employees. I stayed there from 4 September 1936 until September 1938, when this department was dissolved. I worked very hard and learned a great deal. I acquired considerable experience at taking dictation, sometimes for hours. I also transcribed shorthand. I typed forty or fifty letters a day. I did mailing and filing. There I learned much about business procedures. It was quite a new world for me, having grown up with parents who were musicians without the slightest sense of business.

One of my supervisors there was named Friedemann. He was very intelligent, but if you forgot a comma he would berate you cruelly. There was a small room where the files were kept, and I would go there and cry. I received sixty marks a month for my work, which was very little. I turned all the money over to my parents, keeping just enough for the subway. The office was at Taubenstrasse 35, which was in the heart of Berlin’s financial district. I brought my lunch from

home in a little metal container. My mother packed me food, and during lunchtime I warmed it up on a little stove. It was a small office, and almost everyone there was very pleasant. I was the youngest. When I started I wasn't yet sixteen years old.

Because I was still so young, there was a legal requirement that I take business classes at a trade school. This didn't cost anything, but my employer had to let me go. There was one teacher there who was very much opposed to the Nazis, and he would often speak against them. One day when I arrived he was no longer there. He had been denounced by one of the students and sent to a concentration camp. That saddened me. He wasn't Jewish, of course. Jews had been forbidden to be teachers in 1933, I think. It became more and more difficult for Jews to find jobs because there were fewer and fewer Jewish businesses.

The Isar Lebensversicherung continued this small Jewish department, called *Familienschutz*—family protection. Most of the business was from small towns and villages, where people needed just enough money to pay their funeral expenses when they died. They paid their premiums through the post office. It worked like this: Each policy-holder received a small magazine, of perhaps six pages, for which they paid 3, 5, or 6 marks, depending on how much death benefit they had signed up for. The post office was notified by our office how much each person had to pay, and the post office collected the money and sent it to the insurance company. All the names were on cards. I even remember a man named Leo Müller, who lived in a village on the Rhine. He had signed up to pay three marks per month. Then one day we received notice from the post office that he hadn't paid, and we had to write a letter to find out what had happened to him. Thus there was always extensive correspondence. When it became clear that most of these Jewish people were not going to die in a normal way, this division was terminated, or perhaps it was taken over by a non-Jewish administration.

In the fall of 1938 we were all let go, and once again I had to look for a job. I applied here and there. Then one day I ran into an acquaintance from the *Familienschutz*. His name, I think, was Kirschenbaum. I said that I was looking for a job. He told me that he was working for the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, a Jewish newspaper, and that they were looking for a secretary. There were two Jewish newspapers still being printed at that time in Berlin. The other was the *Jüdische Rundschau*. He recommended me, and I was hired.

8.

My father died in June 1938 of a heart attack. He had had very high blood pressure for years. It began with the *Verbot*, when he was forbidden to teach. After that he deteriorated emotionally. Sometimes, he would just sit in his upholstered chair and stare into space. He was filled with bitterness and despair.

The heart specialist Professor Zahler had prescribed the following: When his blood pressure went up, he was to fast and have complete bed rest, and every day to drink so and so many milligrams of fruit juice, or perhaps it was water. And that invariably reduced his blood pressure. Dr. Zahler was still quite young, and a very interesting man. Both my father and mother greatly admired him. My mother said to him, "When you come and tell him he has to fast, he's like a lamb. But when I tell him, 'No, you can't eat this, and you can't eat that,' then he gets furious and makes a scene." The doctor just laughed and said, "Well, after all, I'm not married to him." He sent my parents a bill for a several hundred marks. My father had no medical insurance, having always been self-employed, and of course, my parents had no money. My mother offered to give him an oriental carpet in lieu of payment, and my father thereupon stopped seeing him. He returned to our family doctor, Dr. Bonin, who was Jewish, and who later emigrated to Chicago. My father died not long afterwards.

Toward the end of May 1938, or perhaps it was already the first of June, a man came to the house. He was in civilian clothes and belonged, I think, to the secret police. He sent my mother out of the room and talked with my father. He was very abusive, threatening, and insulting. He accused my father of teaching "Aryan" students. My father showed him the letter he had received from the Interior Ministry. This man thereupon confiscated the letter. My mother was in the other room looking through the door, and saw him clutching at the table to keep from keeling over. The man left, and the next day, or perhaps it the day after, my father died. Some neighbors must have denounced my father. We felt at the time that it was the grace of God that it happened that way, because two days later many Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps. My mother and I concluded that because of this man's appearance, my father was probably on the list of those to be picked up. He was spared that. At least he died at home in his own bed.

At that time they weren't yet sending people to the East. All of that wasn't yet in place in 1938. The concentration camps were there: Oranienburg, Dachau, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald. Papa died on the third of June. It was the Friday before Pentecost, a holiday on which we always went on an excursion. For us Pentecost was like a spring festival. At about seven o'clock in the

morning, he said to my mother, “What shall we do on Pentecost if it rains?” Those were the last words he said, “What shall we do on Pentecost if it rains?” My mother pulled me out of bed crying, “Papa’s dying, Papa’s dying, come quickly.” But when I got there he was already dead.

It was a great shock, though it was not unexpected. Then the family came, and there was a big funeral. My father’s brother Saul came from Wiesbaden, and the two brothers from Berlin.

9.

Saul talked to my mother and told her that in the case of a mixed marriage, when the Jewish member of the marriage died, the “Aryan” member could, if the child gave up the Jewish religion, make application to the Ministry of the Interior for the child to be retroactively declared *Mischling ersten Grades*. I was considered Jewish. I *was* Jewish. The Nuremberg laws came out in October 1935, at around the same time my father received the *Verbot*, and I had to leave school. I was half Jewish, and half “Aryan,” from my mother’s side. Even though I had been raised in the Jewish religion, my parents could have registered me as having no religion, or even have had me baptized. They didn’t do this, and I understand why they didn’t. For a variety of reasons they felt that this wouldn’t be right.

The Nuremberg laws with respect to people like me who were half Jewish made an important distinction. A retroactive date, August 1935, was established. The laws stated that if a person who was racially mixed was a member of the Jewish community on that date, then that person was considered wholly Jewish. Thus they made a distinction based on who was Jewish by religion. If the person was without religion on that date or had been baptized a Christian, then that person was declared a *Mischling ersten Grades*—mixed-race of the first degree. I fell under the category of those who were considered fully Jewish. At that retroactive date I was fourteen years old. A fourteen-year-old doesn’t normally choose his religion. The parent does. In those cases, my uncle explained to my mother, when the child in question had been young and the Jewish member of the marriage had died, then an application could be made if that child had since left the Jewish religion. There was then the possibility to be declared *Mischling ersten Grades* by decree of the Ministry of the Interior.

After my uncle Saul had talked with my mother about this possibility of my leaving the Jewish religion and my being recognized as *Mischling ersten Grades*, my mother put tremendous pressure on me to leave the Jewish religion. I felt very bad about this. It broke my heart. My mother always made me feel that I should do this for her sake. She had been a Christian, and what

was wrong with being Christian? What she didn't understand is that I felt guilty. It seemed wrong to give up your religion just so you could obtain some advantage. At the time it seemed a matter of some degree of hardship, not a matter of life and death. We didn't know yet that they intended to kill all the Jews. The persecution was severe enough, and had I been *Mischling ersten Grades*, I could have gotten a job. I wouldn't have been able to study at the university, and I wouldn't have been able to get married, but otherwise there wouldn't have been any problem as to where I could live or work. Of course, there were many places that would be closed to me professionally, but existence would have been much easier.

I just couldn't do it. I felt that it would be a dishonorable thing to do. I had been brought up Jewish and had never considered the possibility of not continuing to be Jewish. I thought that I was going to be Jewish for the rest of my life. I worked in Jewish offices, and all my friends at work were Jewish. Of course, throughout the period of persecution one's sphere grew smaller and smaller, and in the end you were able to be only with Jewish people. As long as my father lived, from 1935 to 1938, he could not rent a room to anyone who was not Jewish. Everyone who rented a room from us was Jewish.

Then, after my father's death, we could no longer rent rooms to Jews. Jews could no longer live just anywhere. There were certain houses where only Jewish people lived. Our house in Pragerstrasse 20 was owned by a Jew, but he was forced to sell. As soon as the house was sold, all the Jewish people had to move out. My mother and I could stay because my mother was not Jewish, and my father had died. Even when the persecution grew worse, I couldn't bring myself to give up my religion. I felt that I was Jewish. And the more I was persecuted, the more solidarity I felt with my identity and with those who were being persecuted with me. I did not want to save myself at the price of abandoning my religion.

My mother continued to reproach me and enlisted many people to talk to me and put pressure on me. One day I received a call from the Jewish Zionist emigration office, at Meineckestrasse 10. I went there, and a man talked to me. He said, "Your uncle wrote to us and told us that your mother is putting you under pressure to leave the Jewish religion. If your mother puts you under pressure, we want to help you to emigrate to Palestine. We have the possibility for you to go with the youth Aliyah. You will be trained to be in charge of housekeeping in a kibbutz." These were management positions, and there was a two-year free education. All the training and education would be in Hebrew. I knew perhaps five or ten words in Hebrew. He said, "We can't send you

immediately; you have to learn Hebrew. We'll arrange for you to join a Hebrew class. It will be here in Meineckestrasse 10."

This was a big building that housed various Jewish organizations. I felt uncomfortable hearing my mother spoken of negatively, even though I felt bad that she was pressuring me to renounce Judaism. I was between two chairs. I considered the possibility of going to Palestine and getting an education, of learning Hebrew. When the day of my first Hebrew class arrived, on 9 November 1938, I set out on foot for class. It was no more than twenty minutes from where I lived. I arrived at seven o'clock in the evening and found everything closed. Someone told us to go home as quickly as possible. On the way home I saw groups of people standing and talking. In my street, across from where I lived, I saw in the middle of the street a group of people talking and shouting. One man shouted, "There's a Jew! There's a Jew!" I quickly disappeared into my house.

That night was *Kristallnacht*, the night of shattered glass. That meant the end of my learning Hebrew. It was also the end of my job, because the Jewish newspapers were closed immediately. I was still on probation, and so I was immediately let go from the *Israelitische Familienblatt*. The other workers remained another month or two, because according to German law no one could be fired without notice. Many Jewish organizations were closed. The immigration organizations, Zionist organizations, all were closed. Many Jewish schools were closed. Everything Jewish was closed, and so I had no prospects for finding a job. But a day earlier a man had telephoned the newspaper to place an advertisement for a secretary. He needed someone for six weeks, until he could close his business. The law required all Jewish businesses to be closed by 31 December 1938. The person who spoke with him told him that the paper would not be able to print his advertisement, but that they could send him someone who had worked there, and they sent me. So I had a job until the end of December.

10.

The year 1939 began, and I was without a job. My mother had received no income the last half year since my father's death. She had not yet been accepted as a member of the *Reichsmusikkammer* and so could not teach. Now that all Jewish businesses had been closed, I would not be able find a secretarial job. The descent continued. First I had had to leave school. Then I had gone to secretarial school and held a series of secretarial jobs, in which I had acquired a certain degree of skill. Jews had long been unable to not work for non-Jews, and now, it seemed, Jews couldn't work even for themselves. I finally gave up the search for secretarial work and

accepted a job for six hours a day as a cleaning woman for a Jewish family. I was to begin the fourteenth of January. Perhaps the position included cooking as well. It was not an easy decision for me to accept this job. I was not a very robust person, and the job of a housekeeper was heavy work.

But fate intervened, and my downward spiral was halted for a time. It must have been the ninth or tenth of January when the telephone rang, and a voice said, "This is Dr. Hirsch. This is Dr. Walter Hirsch. Your name was given to me by Frau Hildesheimer. Can you start tomorrow in my office as a secretary? I am a lawyer. Can you come over immediately? I want to talk with you."

I do not remember Frau Hildesheimer's first name. I had studied English with her. (Perhaps I will someday emigrate to England, I thought.) I had begun the class while my father was still alive. Since he died on the third of June, 1938, the English class must have been sometime in 1937. There were four or five of us who met weekly at Frau Hildesheimer's apartment. We sat around her dining-room table, and she taught us English. We were all Jewish. My father seldom praised me, but I heard once from some acquaintances that he had remarked how proud he was of me for attending this class. After my father's death, we had very little money. I told Frau Hildesheimer that I would not be able to take her class any longer; but she insisted that I continue without charge. She was a well-to-do woman. She had been married to an Englishman and in fact had lived in England for a number of years. She had two sons. One was in Switzerland and the other in Holland. One of her sons was a musician. He taught in the Quaker school Eerde in Ommen, in the Netherlands. A British citizen by birth, he was interned after the German invasion of the Netherlands. He resumed his teaching after the war.

In late 1938 Frau Hildesheimer prepared to emigrate to England, and that was the end of our class. I remember typing for her a list of all her possessions. At that time one could still emigrate and could take one's belongings. To get through German customs you had to provide a thorough itemized list of your belongings. This must have been toward the end of 1938.

After she left Germany, Frau Hildesheimer sent me a card that she had written on the boat. She wrote, "I send you greetings at the moment I am leaving the country I love."

I was surprised that Frau Hildesheimer had spoken to Dr. Hirsch about me, because I had lost contact with her. Could this have been in January 1939, after Dr. Hirsch came out of Oranienburg?

"Can you come over immediately?" he repeated.

“Yes,” I replied. “I am quite interested. I have quite a bit of experience with secretarial work. I can take shorthand and type.”

“Can you come right away? The address in Tauentzienstrasse 7, second floor.”

Tauentzienstrasse is not far from where we lived, about a twenty-minute walk from our house in the Pragerstrasse. I left our house at number 20 and walked down the Pragerstrasse. Although our house was destroyed in the bombing raid of 22 November 1943 and has been replaced by a modern structure, the house next door, at Pragerstrasse 19, is still standing. Our house was close to the Pragerplatz. To the left of us was a dairy store, and beyond that a shop where vegetables were sold. And then came the corner at the Pragerplatz.

Before the war, Pragerstrasse was a long street. It led all the way to the Nürnbergerplatz, where there was a subway station. At Nürnbergerplatz I turned into the Nürnbergerstrasse. I am no longer certain whether this street led directly into Tauentzienstrasse or whether I first had to walk down Joachimthalerstrasse. Anyhow, one of those streets led to Tauentzienstrasse, which was a very busy street, with a grassy median on which the streetcar ran. It was one of the more elegant streets in our part of Berlin, not far from the Kurfürstendamm. It was a prominent business street with elegant stores typical of the western part of Berlin. At one end of the street was a large, elegant department store, KDW—Kaufhaus des Westens—and at the other end the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche, and there the Kurfürstendamm begins. The “Ku-damm” was the most elegant street in the western part of the city. Here are the Bahnhof Zoo, and also the streetcar and subway, together making this one of the major transit centers of western Berlin.

I had to cross the street to reach number 7. The front door was at street level, and I walked up the stairs to Dr. Hirsch’s second-floor apartment and rang the bell. The door was opened by a friendly woman wearing an apron and with her hair pulled back in a bun. She appeared so unassuming that I thought she must be the maid. “My name is Ruth Lilienthal,” I said. “Herr Dr. Hirsch asked me to come over.” “I am Käthe Hirsch,” she replied, “Dr. Hirsch’s wife.” And she invited me inside.

On one side of the vestibule was the kitchen, which was in the process of being remodeled into a small office. I was led into the living room on the other side, which was now a reception room.

“Sit down, please,” said Dr. Hirsch. “Thank you for coming so promptly. I am starting up a legal practice in my home. Until recently I had a large practice downtown, with a large office. But of course, with the new laws I have been forced to give that up. Neither my office manager nor

any of my secretaries were Jewish, and so I am not allowed to employ any of them. I need a Jewish secretary. In my former life I was 'Rechtsanwalt Hirsch,' but such exalted titles are now reserved only for the so-called Aryans. We Jewish lawyers are to be known henceforth as *Konsulenten*. *Konsulent* Dr. Walter Israel Hirsch. Practice limited to Jews. You were recommended to me by Frau Hildesheimer. Do you have any other references?"

"Until recently, I worked for the Familienschutz division of the Isar Lebensversicherung," I replied. "I can give you the name of the director, Ernst Polifka. I am certain that he will give me a good recommendation."

The Isar Lebensversicherung had taken over an insurance company called Phoenix, for which Ernst Polifka had worked in Vienna. After the merger he had been transferred to Berlin to take charge of the Familienschutz. This was possible because he was Jewish.

I returned home, and later that afternoon Dr. Hirsch telephoned and said, "I was just able to reach Herr Polifka. He is preparing to leave for Cuba."

"For Cuba?"

"Yes, many Jewish people are leaving—those who have obtained affidavits to emigrate to America. If their number hasn't come up to enter the United States, there are several countries that are willing to take them in temporarily, among them the Philippines and Cuba. Quite a few are going to Cuba. Herr Polifka has given you an excellent recommendation. Can you start work tomorrow?"

I started the next day. The work was very interesting, and I enjoyed working at Dr. Hirsch's legal practice. Frau Dr. Hirsch worked there, too, typing and filing. I learned a tremendous amount there that would be of use to me throughout my life. I learned to write and to express myself well through hours each day of taking dictation for Dr. Hirsch's court cases.

Dr. Hirsch was jovial and friendly. The kitchen was soon transformed into a combination reception room and waiting room. The reception room was separated from the living room by the vestibule. Frau Hirsch and I worked in this little reception room. Here we had our typewriters. There was a barrier, and beyond that a table and two chairs, and there the clients would wait. We were all in the same boat and often talked with one another.

Käthe Hirsch and I became very good friends. The Hirsches had six children. Frau Hirsch would say, "When Hitler has been defeated, then, perhaps, my husband can talk me into having a seventh child." The oldest child, Manfred, was about fourteen. The other children were Mariana, age 12; then a boy whose name I can't recall; then Dieter, Dorothy, and Alex—a little girl who

was not yet two. The household also included a governess—*Kinderfräulein*—and a cook. They had a very large apartment, the entire second floor of the building. Upstairs lived Frau Hirsch's mother. Her father, a Dr. Seelig, had been a well-known gynecologist with a large practice.

I learned later from Frau Hirsch that Dr. Hirsch had just been released from the concentration camp at Oranienburg. On 9 November 1938, *Kristallnacht*, several thousand prominent Jewish men had been arrested and sent to Oranienburg, in northern Germany, not far from Berlin. At the beginning of 1939 many of these Jewish men were released from the concentration camps and allowed to emigrate. Indeed, a condition for their release was that they emigrate. They usually had to pay a large sum for this privilege.

The fact is that although there were laws, they were interpreted inconsistently, and so some were able to leave and others not. The observance of the law by the various officials was random and capricious.

Dr. Hirsch had been taken away on November 9, and now, after two months in the camp, had just returned to Berlin. Käthe Hirsch told me that he was never the same after those two months in the camp. He never talked about what had happened there. He could not tolerate being approached from behind.

Dr. Hirsch had been an officer in the first world war, serving as an airplane navigator. He had been one of only a few Jewish officers. He was tall and athletic, energetic and intelligent. He exuded confidence. I cannot remember what he looked like, except that he looked Jewish. He had the largest practice of all the Jewish *Konsulenten* who remained in Berlin. He instilled a sense of trust in his clients.

I sat for hours each day in the living-room office taking dictation. In 1939 and 1940 Dr. Hirsch could still represent his clients in court, and so he had many legal briefs to write. There were many divorce cases, from mixed marriages, and the documents for these divorce cases were very explicit, with phrases like, "When was the last occurrence of sexual intercourse?" According to German law, if a man or woman has been unfaithful and if they then have intercourse, the adultery is considered forgiven and cannot be used as grounds for divorce. I had led a very sheltered life and was quite naïve, though I had recently turned eighteen. I would turn red when I would have to write about such strange matters of which I had never heard before, and one day, shortly after I had been working there about a month, Dr. Hirsch said to me, "I believe you have learned more here in these four weeks than in your whole life."

Dr. Hirsch wrote beautiful German. He would sit in his chair or pace up and down and dictate fluently. He never needed to correct himself. I would take down his words in shorthand and then type it up. I took shorthand well and was a very good typist.

I was paid one hundred twenty marks per month. At that time one was paid according to age and experience. At the insurance company I earned sixty marks, and then after a year this was increased to seventy marks. So, one hundred twenty marks was a great improvement. There was a woman in my office in the insurance company, Lotte Oppenheimer. She was probably in her thirties. She was divorced and had a child. She made over three hundred marks. One hundred twenty marks was not much, but my mother and I lived from this. Our rent was taken care of by renting out rooms.

Dr. Hirsch considered talking on the telephone an interruption to his research on his cases. Since he did not like to talk with his clients on the telephone, his wife and I handled all the telephone conversations with clients, who would often call with questions about the progress of their cases. Thus I learned to deal with the public and became somewhat conversant in legal matters.

Over time, I became very friendly with the Hirsch family. I worked there for a year and a half, until the fall of 1940. The work was interesting and satisfying. But I had to leave temporarily in the summer of 1940 when I became ill. I had been working overtime quite often and often sat typing until late in the evening. Then Frau Hirsch would bring me a warm meal. For this overtime Dr. Hirsch would sometimes give me extra money. I learned that the government had taken over the bank accounts of all Jews, and that Dr. Hirsch was allowed to draw only a certain amount from it each month.

I rather suspect that Dr. Hirsch was not always faithful to his wife. He liked me, that I can say. I liked him too, but of course, he was married. And I liked his wife and the children. Once I answered the door, and there stood a woman with a bouquet of flowers. Evidently having expected Dr. Hirsch, she almost melted into my arms. Once Dr. Hirsch came into the office while I was typing and remarked that one of his clients had thought I was his daughter. He said he was delighted at this thought, since if I were his daughter he could address me with the informal "Du." I looked quizzically at him, and then he asked whether I would go to the movies with him. I declined.

Once, in the summer, when I was going on vacation, he gave me an extra twenty or thirty marks, and told me to buy myself a new bathing suit. He told me not to tell his wife that he had

given me this money. Eventually, he realized that I was not going to respond to his veiled approaches; he stopped giving me extra money.

Dr. Hirsch was very strict with the children, as was his wife. One child, Dieter, was my favorite. He was a gentle, quiet boy, not strong and energetic, and because of this his father did not seem to care much for him. Once, when I was taking dictation from Dr. Hirsch, Dieter, who had done something bad, came into the room. Dr. Hirsch scolded him terribly while I sat cringing.

In the summer I took ill, and the doctors thought it was my lungs, or maybe my heart. For four weeks I was more or less bedridden. My mother put the sofa out on the porch, and I lay there to get fresh air. During the time of my illness Dr. Hirsch hired an older woman who had been a secretary at the court, but who had been forced to quit because Jews were no longer allowed to work there. I forget her name, but I remember that she was small, and I think she was divorced. I remember that once while I was still recuperating I came to Dr. Hirsch for a visit, and I said to her, "Do you think they will take me back?" And she said, "Are you crazy? You don't know how much they think of you. You know his whole business inside out."

When I was finally well enough to work, I returned to Dr. Hirsch. But now fall had arrived, and he was making plans to emigrate to the United States. He had received affidavits for himself and his family, and he was winding up his practice. First, he let the other secretary go, and she was upset about this. She went to the employment office for Jews, and while there, she informed them that there was still a young girl working for Dr. Hirsch. Perhaps it was out of malice. Perhaps they had questioned her. I was nineteen. They immediately telephoned Dr. Hirsch and asked him, "Do you have a Jewish girl working for you? She must immediately be put into factory work. All Jews must now work in the factories, and she must appear tomorrow at the *Arbeitsamt*." Dr. Hirsch had to let me go at once. When the time came when all the Jews were being picked up and transported to the East, this woman committed suicide.

I had to appear the next morning at the *Arbeitsamt für Juden*. My mother went with me and said, "I am this girl's mother. I am Aryan, and a member of the *Reichsmusikkammer*. I need my daughter to help me at home." Since this wasn't official work, they closed out my *Arbeitsbuch* (work papers) and assented to my mother's wish. I spoke not a word the whole time. Many officials were trying at that time to accommodate the Aryan member of a mixed family. That is how my uncle Abraham and cousin Werner survived.

I remained on friendly terms with the Hirsches. They bought accordions for their children, and my mother gave them lessons. For a long time I kept in touch with them.

11.

After my father died, which was on the third of June, 1938, my mother had pressured me to leave the Jewish religion, so that she could apply to have me declared *Mischling ersten Grades*. I had resisted. But shortly after my father's death, my mother ran into a woman named Gertie Kosche, who in former years had rented a room from us and who had sung in my father's choir. My mother told her that Papa had recently died. She suggested that I might like to join a Quaker youth group, to which the daughter of a Jewish friend of hers, who like me was half Jewish, though she was *Mischling ersten Grades*, belonged. This girl, whose name was Ursula Horwitz, telephoned me and invited me to go with her to the group's next meeting.

I welcomed her invitation. I was trying to establish more contact with other young people. I had gone for a time to two different Jewish youth groups, but I didn't feel that I belonged there, and I stopped going. However, with the Quakers, I felt immediately at home. The Quaker youth group met every Monday evening and often on Thursdays as well. I also began to attend Meeting for Worship on Sunday morning. I was very happy among the Quakers.

In the Jewish religion the talk was always about the "eternal one," which for me was too far removed, too abstract, without human emotion and warmth. The Quakers embraced the person of Jesus, a man who had lived, suffered, and died, and this made a deep impression on me. Furthermore, in the Quaker youth group we discussed questions of importance to young people. I felt very much accepted there. None of these people were Nazis. Indeed, the Quakers were to some extent persecuted by the Nazis. Several members of the Quaker youth group were, like me, half Jewish.

By the end of 1939 I felt that I had become a Quaker and was no longer Jewish. On 20 December 1939 I went to the Jewish central offices in Berlin and signed a paper in which I stated that I was withdrawing from the Jewish community.

At about this time I received a letter from England from Frau Hildesheimer, the woman with whom I had studied English. She wrote that she knew of a possibility for me to emigrate to England, and she included the name and address of someone in Berlin. At this my mother became very upset. She did not want me to leave. She became so upset that she began to complain of her heart. Then she telephoned Dr. Bonin, who came over to examine her. She complained to him about me, that I wanted to abandon her and emigrate to England. She hoped for sympathy from him, but instead he took my side. He said that I should get out as soon as possible, that I had no future in Germany. But I stayed. I felt that I could not abandon my mother.

12.

In 1941, at Eastertime, the Young Friends always had an Easter conference. I was clerk of the Young Friends, and it was my job to write letters to Young Friends throughout Germany and to prominent Quakers inviting them to this meeting. There were perhaps only 250 Quakers, and about twenty-five Young Friends, in all of Germany. These letters were written on behalf of the Young Friends, and I signed my name as clerk. With some of the people to whom I wrote a friendly correspondence developed. One young woman, Hanna Jordan, and her mother, Mitzi, became close friends. Another, Hanni Mensching, was the daughter of a pastor in a small town to the western of Hanover who was later to hide me.

It was the Wednesday before Easter, at seven o'clock in the morning. I was already awake. My mother wasn't up yet, as I recall. At seven o'clock the doorbell rang. It was the Gestapo, coming for me. My mother became hysterical, crying and screaming. She was standing in her bathrobe. I left with the two plainclothes policemen. We walked down the sidewalk, one on either side of me. When we arrived at Gestapo headquarters they began to interrogate me about the letter I had written inviting the Young Friends to the Easter conference. One of the recipients was a young man from Dresden. He had asked his supervisor at work for a day off to travel to Berlin. The supervisor wanted to know the details, and he was shown my letter. He asked about the Young Friends and in particular about the Ruth Lilienthal who had signed the letter. The name sounded Jewish, and so he sent the letter to the Gestapo.

The Gestapo interrogated and interrogated. I remained calm, explaining that the Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers, was a Christian denomination, founded in England in the mid-seventeenth century, that rejects formal sacraments, a formal creed, a priesthood, and violence. It was not a secret organization. I explained that the Young Friends was a youth organization and that we always met at Easter. The interrogation lasted until about four o'clock in the afternoon. As I left I overheard two Gestapo men talking: "The girl was very calm," said one. "Yes, but you should have heard the mother," replied the second.

That was the Wednesday before Easter. I came home in the late afternoon. My mother was relieved to see me. In spite of the experience at the Gestapo, we went ahead with the Easter conference. It began on Friday evening and continued through Easter Sunday. All the time we wondered whether the Gestapo were going to show up. This time they did not.

In June I was summoned again to Gestapo headquarters. I was to appear at eight in the morning on the third of June. Again they interrogated me. They wanted to know about the Young

Friends' conference. I had to sign a paper in which I promised never again to send out invitations to Young Friends. It was the second anniversary of my father's death. As I came out of the Gestapo headquarters my mother met me, and together we went to the Jewish cemetery in Weissensee, in the eastern part of Berlin.

In the summer I was invited to visit Hanna Jordan, whom I had met through the Young Friends, at her home in Wuppertal. Her parents were quite well-off. They owned a factory. On this visit I became close to her parents. Hanna's mother, Mitzi, was Jewish; her father was not. Hanna was artistically gifted. At age nine she had already had an exhibition of her paintings and sculptures. She later became a well-known stage designer in Germany.

I continued to attend the Young Friends group. In August we had a meeting. We met on Mondays. Or perhaps it was Thursdays. There were eight of us in the Berlin group, I think, or perhaps as many as ten or twelve. A stranger showed up, clearly a plainclothes policeman. He sat among us, in the circle with us. We were all very uncomfortable. As I traveled home on the train, together with one new member of the group, this person said to me, "This won't be the last time he'll come." I decided to withdraw from the Young Friends.

13.

At the beginning of September 1941 I received a letter ordering me to report once again to the employment office for Jews. As I have said, I had gone to this *Arbeitsamt für Juden* a year earlier, in September, and at that time my workbook had been closed, and I had been allowed to work for my mother as her housekeeper. This letter informed me that I was to be sent to work in a factory.

I went to work in an asbestos factory—the *Deutsche Asbestoswerke*. It was located in Reinickendorf Ost, a region in the northwest part of Berlin, way out of town. To get there I had to take the subway from Bahnhof Zoo to Bahnhof Reinickendorf–Ost, changing at, I think, Alexanderplatz.

On my first day I was shown the way to the cafeteria, where the regular workers were given a hot meal. Jews were not allowed to eat in the cafeteria, but we were supplied with a daily ration of ersatz coffee. It was something warm, at least. It was served in a brown metal pitcher, and it was my job to fetch it from the cafeteria. I was the youngest of our group, and such tasks fell to me.

I was assigned to a large room with several other Jewish women, as well as a couple of women from France and one from Poland who had been sent to Germany as laborers. Our job was to operate certain machines that converted asbestos into a thread, which in turn was woven on

another machine into insulating covers for pipes used in submarines. When the asbestos covers were ready, we had to submerge them into black rubber, which hardened into a coating that provided additional insulation and strength.

It was very hard work, standing all day at the machines. My arms were in black rubber up to the elbows the whole day. The din was terrible.

There were very few men working at the factory, none in our hall, excepting the foreman. Any man strong enough for this kind of work was certainly away at the front. There were eight women in the hall where I worked, but our number dwindled over time. Our foreman wasn't so bad. He could have treated us as he liked, as we really had no legal protection. He liked me, and that helped. I worked very hard, though we were paid very little—about fifty marks a month.

The regular workers received extra ration cards for meat, whole milk, and butter. They received real soap, too, for the job was very dirty. Soap at that time was usually a grayish mass, more clay, really, than soap. We received none of these things, however. And we were not permitted to work together with the German workers, who were in a different area. Our group comprised five Jews, the two French women, and a Polish girl.

The two French girls were very pleasant. They were cheerful, and they taught me French songs. But the work was hard. There were of various kinds of asbestos tubes. Some had to be run twice through the machine. The tubes were submerged into the rubber mass, and then they would emerge like a snake from a swamp. We then wound the snakes onto a drum. Then we lifted these drums. They were heavy—a hundred pounds and more. And the unbelievable din. I think it was at this time that my hearing became damaged.

The hall where we worked was large and very dirty with asbestos. As we stood at the machines, the asbestos particles would drift down like a winter snowfall. We were covered in asbestos from head to toe. And our arms were up to the elbows in black rubber.

This rubber was difficult to remove. When six o'clock came and I was through for the day, I would rub my arms in oil to clean off the rubber—as much as was possible. It was at this time that I began to get pains in my heart.

It was a very sorrowful time. I did not know from one day to the next when I set out in the morning whether I would return home that night.

In October 1941, on the fifteenth of the month—I had started work in September—on the fifteenth of October the law was promulgated that Jews had to wear the star. This created a particular problem for me because I was the only remaining Jew in a building that otherwise had

been “cleansed” of Jews. I was an anomaly. Buildings were either all Jewish or all non-Jewish, but I was the Jewish daughter of an Aryan mother.

My mother taught music in our apartment, and her students, mostly children, came for lessons throughout the day. The new law stated that where a Jew lived a star had to be affixed to the door. What were we to do? A star would have meant the end of my mother’s work. As an Aryan, my mother was permitted to teach only Aryans, and a star was a barrier that an Aryan would not cross. It was not a matter of principle: We lived on my mother’s earnings. For my work at the factory I was paid very little—perhaps a fourth of what I had earned as a secretary.

We finally hit upon a way out of our dilemma. Our apartment had a front entrance and a rear entrance. To get to the back entrance of the apartment one had to go through the basement, a dark, dismal place where all the furnaces for the building’s central heating were located. The entrance to the basement was reached by passing through the back yard and then through another entryway, and then one finally came to the back entry. It was at this entry where we put the star. At the front my mother put up a plaque identifying her as a member of the NSV, a Nazi welfare organization that she had joined, the most innocuous such organization she could find. And so the students who came for lessons at our apartment could safely cross the threshold under the aegis of benevolent Nazi welfare, while the secret of their teacher’s daughter remained concealed at the back.

Life became more and more difficult. Jews were not allowed to go out on Sundays. Jews were not allowed to go out after eight o’clock in the evening. Jews were not allowed to take trains or subways, unless it was to travel to or from work, for which you were issued a special identification card. This card was large and yellow, with your name on it, your picture, and from where to where you were permitted to take the train.

From where I lived it was about a twenty-minute walk to the subway, to Bahnhof Zoo. There were streetcars that ran along the Pragerstrasse that took you to the subway, but I was not allowed to use these; my card did not give me such permission, being valid only for the train and subway, from Bahnhof Zoo to Reinickendorf–Ost.

Jews were not allowed to buy food except between twelve and one o’clock, and in some stores between four and five in the afternoon. By that time, of course, everything was gone, and from twelve to one I was at work. But I was fortunate in having an Aryan mother. She would take my ration card—with the big “J” on it—to the stores in our neighborhood, where we had been customers for ten years, and the shopkeepers would sell her food. Thus, I was a little more privileged than the others.

The night before the law that required Jews to wear the star went into effect my mother decided that we would commit suicide. She spent the whole night at my bedside, saying, "Come, we'll turn on the gas in the oven." But I said "No, we cannot do that." We argued back and forth all night. My mother was desperate. I was desperate, too, and it was only my religious convictions that held me back. We argued, and the courage to live in the shadow of death prevailed.

Wearing the star was a humiliation. It was a mark of shame. Not the shame of being Jewish, though over time perhaps it came to that, too, but the shame of having been cast out of the light. Outside of your home you had to wear the star. It had to be worn on the left side. At the factory, where we wore black aprons, we had to wear the star on those, too. Everywhere. The star had to be visible, and the police were always there, watching: Was a Jew hiding his star? Perhaps hiding it under her purse? That alone was enough to be sent away. I had always been afraid of the dark, since I was quite young. But now, all of a sudden, the dark became my great friend. At night, the star was invisible.

At night, the city was completely darkened—because of the war. At that time, the air raids had not yet begun; bombs were not yet falling on Berlin. But there were reconnaissance flights, and there were sirens. As early as 1940 people had to go down into the air raid shelters. The bombs, however, did not begin until 1943.

The years when I worked in the factory were difficult. I watched the sun come up in the morning, and then in the evening, as it went down, I would wonder whether the next day I would still be there. They were taking people away in ever greater numbers. Jews would be picked up at random on the street and transported to the East. The great mass of transports began in the fall of 1941. You didn't know when you went out on the street whether you would return home again, then or ever. I remember that each time I would arrive home—my mother was still teaching—I would come home and knock on the sliding door and my mother would say, "You're home. Thank God." Every day was like that. Tomorrow the same as yesterday.

Every day at the factory I would hear reports of disappearances. I heard terrible things. And then I would come home at night and my mother would look at me and say, "Something happened again today, I see it in your face."

And I would always reply, "No, nothing." But I was not able to hide it for long. I was crushed, defeated. It was hopeless, from day to day.

On the first day I had to wear the star, I was glad that when I left for work it was dark, and when I left for home it was again dark. I was always tired—after standing all day at the machines

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had invited me to visit them in Wuppertal. Frau Jordan—Mitzi Jordan—was in a privileged mixed marriage. Frau Jordan was Jewish, but her husband was not. Since Hanna had never been Jewish, she was classified as *Mischling ersten Grades*. At that time Jews were not allowed to travel freely. If you wore the star you had to have a special certificate that stated on which trains and subways you were permitted to travel to and from work. But Frau Jordan had none of these restrictions, even though she was Jewish, because of her privileged mixed marriage. She did not have to wear the star, and she could travel freely.

Mitzi Jordan had several very good friends from her younger years in Berlin, and now that so many trains were leaving for the camps in the East, she realized that she would not be able to see her friends again unless she came soon to Berlin to bid them good-bye.

She wrote to us that she would like to come to Berlin, and so we invited her to stay with us for a couple of days. Mitzi Jordan was a lively, intelligent woman. Several of her friends had been social workers, and she was a member of the International Peace League and other such organizations. Until Hitler came to power, that is, after which such organizations were forbidden.

On Sunday, December 14, she said, “I would like to go to Quaker Meeting. Why don’t you go with me?”

I replied, “I haven’t been to Quaker Meeting for months, because I wear the star. I thought it best that I stay away.”

“Come,” she said, “Let’s go. Another friend of mine, Frieda Levy, will also be there.”

It happened that the Meeting was located on the train line on which I was allowed to travel. We took the train there on Sunday morning and attended Meeting for Worship. Toward the end of Meeting we suddenly heard a commotion. Several Gestapo troopers had entered, and they were shouting, “*Juden heraus!* Are there any Jews here? Out with the Jews!”

And so they came in and started looking for Jews. The Jews there, besides me, were Mitzi Jordan, who did not wear the star; Frieda Levy; and one other Jewish woman who sometimes came to Meeting, whose name I did not know. As if by instinct, the first thing I did was to lock myself in the bathroom. I looked out the window, and thought, “Do I dare jump?” I was on the second floor. I considered this idea for a while, and then I decided, “The others have to face this situation, and I should face it, too.”

So I came out. One of the policemen took down the names of the Jews. They also took down the name of the clerk of the Meeting. And then he took my name, too, and said, “Tomorrow at eight o’clock you must come to Gestapo headquarters.” They ordered us, the four Jews, to appear.

They also ordered the clerk to appear, and also Emil Fuchs, one of the most prominent members of the meeting, who, by the way, was the father of Klaus Fuchs, who stole the American atomic secrets for the Russians. We all were ordered to appear at Gestapo headquarters.

And then we went home, Mitzi and I. In my mind I still heard the cruel shouting, “*Judensau! Jew Pig!*” The next morning dawned dark and gray. I remember it clearly. My mother and I went together to the Gestapo. The two of us, together with Frau Jordan. When we arrived at Gestapo headquarters, my mother waited downstairs, outside. I recall that I had to sign my name, and that there were Gestapo troopers all about, each with a pistol.

When I arrived I saw Emil Fuchs, who had arrived earlier. And also the other lady whose name I can’t remember. We all shook hands, and then we sat down. Then we had to go to a certain room and stand in line. Mitzi Jordan was ahead of me in the line. I stood directly behind her. Years later when I saw her, after the war, she said, “The last words I heard from you were, “Well, I wonder whether this will come out all right.”

Now it was Frau Jordan’s turn, and she went in. I heard the policeman shouting at her. Then the door opened and I saw Frau Jordan being led away by two policemen. My mother, who was standing outside, saw her come out between the two policemen, in handcuffs. She was led to another building, back of the main building.

Then it was my turn, and I went in. The policeman shouted at me, too. I tried to explain that I was really only half Jewish, and lived with my non-Jewish mother. I had to press this, my one advantage—my Aryan mother was my only protection. “Lie!” the trooper shouted at me. “Go to the Jewish Central Office”—it was a Jewish organization that arranged the transports—“Go to the Jewish Central Office and fill out the forms. You are to be sent away with the next transport.”

I went down the stairs and walked out of the building. I told my mother the news. We went directly to the Jewish community building, where I filled out the forms. I had to list all my belongings—these were confiscated when you were sent away. I didn’t have much to fill out, as I didn’t own anything. Just a few clothes. But then we chanced to meet one of my uncles, who was working there at the time. It was my uncle Abraham. There were also some other people who recognized me. They were terribly upset to see me. “Now it’s your turn!” they said.

My uncle spoke with my mother—who, of course, was very upset. He said, “You must go back immediately to the Gestapo headquarters, and go to room number 333. The man who works there is a decent person, and he has sometimes been helpful. And so my mother went there. She had difficulty being let in, but finally she succeeded in getting to room 333. She wept and pleaded

with the man. He finally said, “Compose yourself. When your daughter gets her transport number, come to me and give me the number, and I’ll cross her off the list.”

And then we went home. The next day I had to go to the factory, of course. But I was in a state of shock. Everyone now knew what it meant, to be sent to the East. This was shortly before Christmas.

After about three days my shock and sense of doom subsided. Gradually, I came to believe that for me events were going to turn out all right. I remember once I was walking somewhere in Berlin. I remember the constant feeling that someone was following me. This may seem like the paranoia of the time, but there were always plainclothes police on the street who did nothing but look for Jews. They were looking to see whether a Jew was hiding his star, or whether a Jew, against the prohibition, went into a movie theater.

Frau Jordan was in jail. She shared a cell with nine other Jewish women. We had telephoned her husband immediately after her arrest, and he came at once to Berlin. He felt that it would be dangerous to stay with us and that it would be better, under the circumstances, to stay at a hotel. He also secured the services of a lawyer, who went to the Gestapo. Frau Jordan remained in jail for three weeks, after which the Gestapo telephoned Herr Jordan and told him that he could pick up his wife. She was then released. Frau Jordan was the only one of the ten women in that cell to survive the war. The others, who were fully Jewish and without “Aryan” husbands, were killed.

It was a hard Christmas for me. But of course it could have been much worse. I never received a transport number. After three months, in March, I received a letter from the Gestapo. In this letter I read that my being transported to the East had been temporarily postponed. Temporarily and to an indefinite time.

Frieda Levy, Mitzi Jordan’s friend, as well as the other woman—the one whose name I don’t remember—were sent with the next transport, which was on the sixth of January. This transport was sent to Riga, where there was a large Jewish community. From Riga word came back that this train—a train of unheated cattle cars—that all the passengers on this train arrived in Riga frozen to death.

The transport had left on the sixth of January—the Day of the Three Kings. That day was bitter cold. They had no blankets. Nothing. Shipped away like freight. And they all froze to death. I would have been there if my mother hadn’t pleaded for me.

We were under the constant eye of the police. The Gestapo were always there, looking over your shoulder. I observed something, and I believe this was not paranoia. I had a long subway ride

every day to the asbestos factory, and I had to change at a large station to a train on a different line. I believe it was Alexanderplatz. I was waiting for the train, and when it arrived I boarded the train and stood. Jews were not allowed to sit down unless there was room after everyone else had been seated. So I stood. It was early in the morning, and it was still dark outside. Every day I had observed the same man. He stood near the door with a large newspaper that he pretended to read. As he pretended to read he would stand behind his paper, watching. I am certain he was a police spy! Surely, he was watching. He would ride the train for one station, and then he would get out. I watched him as he crossed to the opposite side of the platform and took the next train back in the opposite direction.

The idea of the Nazis was to sever all contact between Jews and non-Jews. It was precisely such contact that threatened their plan of ridding Germany of the Jews. And those Jews who, like me, survived the war within Germany did so almost invariably with the help of non-Jews. And that is why there had to be spies on the subway. Once, as I came home on the subway—I was wearing the star, of course—someone threw some wrapped candy into my lap. I don't know where it came from. Jews never got such things. Candy, and eggs, and chocolate—these were obtainable only with ration cards that Jews did not get.

A woman I worked with had a similar experience. She was in the train, on her way to work, and when her station came she stood up, and the woman who had been sitting beside her said, "Excuse me, you forgot something." She turned and looked at the seat, and there lay a couple of ration cards. Things like that did happen, and there were people who did feel some pain at seeing people with the star, with "*Jude*" written on it.

It was almost always the men who were nice, seldom the women. At least, that was my experience. The non-Jewish women I encountered were generally virulent anti-Semites. Of course, it was men who were in the Gestapo, who were managing the entire regime of persecution. But in the general population the men were not that bad. Perhaps all the evil men were attracted into official life. It happened once or twice when I was working at my machine that someone came up to me and secretly put some real soap in front of me. Real soap was precious.

The foreman liked me. Everyone who worked there noticed it. I remember that my coworkers once said to me, "You can't be late!" Not that I was late more than once or twice. They said, "When you're late, he sulks about looking terribly angry!" He liked me, and that created a difficulty for me. As a Jewish girl I was really without protection from the larger society, and he really could have done what he wanted to me. He could have done me a great deal of harm,

because I wasn't responding positively to his advances. But he didn't. I think that in spite of everything he respected me.

One particular day I remember. I knew it was his birthday, and when he came by where I was working I said, "Happy birthday!" He then said to me, "At nine o'clock come into my office." I was terrified. At that time I was twenty-one years old. Nine o'clock came, and I went into his office. There he presented me with a piece of birthday cake that he had brought from home. He said, "Eat it here," and I did. I ate my piece of cake and then went back to my machine. I heard all kinds of things about his relations with the French girls.

I worked very hard. I had the highest rate of production among my group. I even received a few bonuses, though these were pitifully small. Once, I was given two days off. Unlike the regular employees, we Jews had no vacation.

When I was getting ready to leave for my two days off the foreman said to me, "Well, where shall we go?"

I was taken aback. I replied, "What are you talking about? I wear the star."

"Oh, don't worry about that, he said "You'll just take it off."

"That is impossible," I replied.

In the end he seems to have accepted the fact that I was not going to get involved with him. He was married, of course, and one of my defenses was to ask after his wife. He had a ten-year-old son, who would occasionally come by.

Under the high ceiling in the enormous hall in which we worked was an enormous wheel that drove all the machinery in our hall. One day, the ubiquitous asbestos had finally clogged this wheel. I then had to climb up and clean it. I had to do that from time to time.

There was a small room where we would sit and eat our lunch. We brought whatever little food we had from home. Our little group received one large metal pitcher of ersatz coffee from the cafeteria. We did not get a meal, like the others. We sat in our little room, a shabby little closet, really. We got along well, and enjoyed one another's company. We had many sad stories to share. Then it began to happen that one after the other was picked up, and we became fewer and fewer. We had been eight or nine at the beginning. Then we were six. Now we were only four. There was one Jewish woman who on the High Holy Days asked me whether during the half hour we had to eat our lunch I would sit with her and sing the prayers. This I did, though I was no longer Jewish.

Another time, I brought my guitar to work and sang some songs for my friends. Once, for my birthday, one of the women baked me a cake. And they all had so little—the ration cards gave you

hardly anything. Some of the other Jewish women brought clothes for the two French girls and the Polish girl. And they gave them some of their whole-milk rations. That was something precious.

There was one extremely voluminous woman from Czechoslovakia. She was one of those Germans—the *Sudetendeutsche*—who were known for their anti-Semitism. There were several others like her, but she was the worst. She was very cruel to us. One day, she was complaining because she had gotten a splinter in her finger that she was unable to remove. I said, “Let me look at it,” and I pulled it out. From that time on she never said anything against the Jews in my presence.

15.

After I gave up the Jewish religion my mother made application to the Ministry of the Interior to have me declared a *Mischling ersten Grades*—“mixed-race of the first degree.” The application was based on three facts: that I was only fourteen years old at the time of the retroactive deadline for me not to have been Jewish, that the Jewish partner of the marriage had died, and that I now lived with my non-Jewish, “Aryan,” mother.

My mother submitted the application, and some time passed. I was then summoned to some office, where I was interrogated. I was photographed front and back—probably to determine whether I had “Aryan” features. Unfortunately, I do not, but they did take some very nice pictures, which unfortunately all disappeared. I had long hair, then, that I used to wear parted in the middle, with a bun at the neck. I thought it looked very nice. They took pictures in profile, pictures from the front, and again from behind. These pictures were sent somewhere. That must have been in 1940. After we had waited half a year, we were notified that the application had been rejected.

Among my connections with the Quakers was a young woman, Dorothee Kaske, who knew someone who was working in the Ministry of the Interior. In fact, he was working in the department that dealt with such applications. She told me that she would talk with the ministry people about me. I hadn’t broached the matter with her, so someone else must have mentioned it to her. I had known her for several years, during the time I had gone to the Quaker Meeting. She thought there was a good chance of success.

So my mother put in a second application, and this woman delivered it in person. Then we waited. After some time we heard that the climate had become better for people like me, and that the application would be favorably considered. My file was sent, and all that remained was to obtain a favorable character report from the head of our local party office. This was a young man

who knew us rather well. We had rented a room to him at one time, and afterwards he had occasionally visited us.

In the summer of 1942, it must have been in July, he called on us. He told us that he had received a form with which he was to supply a recommendation about us. He said that he had written a very positive report about my mother and me, that he knew us, and so on. However, in the local party office was a woman connected with the Gestapo. Her name was Frau von Bonin. She said, "Over my dead body will this Jew be saved. Let her die like all the others," and on the side of the official recommendation she wrote something negative about us.

We had come so close to solving the problem of what to do with me, but on the fourth of August, which was my father's birthday, my mother was summoned to the local party office. There were Frau von Bonin and a Gestapo officer. They interrogated my mother for hours, and they threatened her as well. They said that they had tapped our telephone, that we had let Jews use our telephone. Jews were no longer allowed to have a telephone. Actually, there was only one instance I know of when we let some Jewish neighbors use the telephone. They had come once in the evening. My mother returned home very upset. I asked her, "Did you cry?" She replied, "A single tear would have been too good for those people."

And so on this day, August 4, my father's birthday, we realized that the second application for me to be recognized as *Mischling ersten Grades* would never be approved, because of the defamation that Frau von Bonin had added to the official document.

This whole episode of the second application had an ironic aftermath. As I said before, my mother had sent the application to the Ministry of the Interior through my Quaker acquaintance, who was guiding the application through the approval process. While the application was making its way through the bureaucracy, Frau Kaske visited us several times, and on each visit gave us a report on the application. Finally, we heard from her that I was on the list of those who had been approved. However, it turned out that it was not I who was on the list, but a boy whose family name also was Lilienthal. This boy was younger than I, perhaps by five years. Like me, he had been brought up Jewish, and the Jewish partner in the marriage had died. Or perhaps there was a divorce. In any case, we later received a letter informing us that my mother's application had been rejected. This letter arrived at the end of the year, 1942.

There was a girl who had been in the Young Friends with me by the name of Hella Gorn who was very active in hiding Jewish people. She approached me and told me that she would help me to hide when the time came. She had many contacts with underground organizations. I said to her,

“Thank you, but I will never go into hiding. I don’t have the nerve for it, and I wouldn’t be willing to endanger anyone who might hide me.”

I was still working in the asbestos factory at this time. My mother was still renting out rooms. Of the rooms in our apartment—five rooms in addition to a kitchen and maid’s room—a large room in the front was rented, as was the maid’s room in the back. And a third, small, room was also rented. The front room was a very attractive room. Somehow, I think it was through the Quakers, a Dr. Ludwig Zeise came to look at this room. Dr. Zeise was an anthroposophist, and he was studying to become a psychologist. He had a Ph.D. in something. He was about my mother’s age—in his forties, that is.

He told my mother that he was married to a Jewish woman, and that although he was separated from her, he didn’t want to divorce her, because the marriage offered his wife some protection. But there was another woman with whom he had a liaison, and in fact he had had a child with her. He showed my mother a picture of his friend, Erika, and the child, and told us that he was looking for a place where she would be able to visit him. My mother then told him about me, and invited him to come for coffee the next Saturday.

Because I was working so hard in the factory, our doctor had suggested that on Saturday and Sunday I should mostly rest. There wasn’t any place for me to go anyway, as Jews had so many restrictions placed on them. I believe that on Sunday Jews weren’t allowed to go out on the streets at all, so as not to offend anyone coming from church who might have to see a Jew wearing the star. When Saturday came, I was so tired, and so unhappy, that I told my mother, “I don’t want to see this man. I don’t want to see anybody.” In the end, so as not to spoil my mother’s invitation, I dressed and joined the company.

My meeting Dr. Zeise was decisive for me. He planted an idea in my mind. As we were talking, I said, “If it is God’s will that I die, then I should accept that.” But he replied, “But you don’t know. It may be God’s will that you fight for your life.” And that was like a seed falling on fertile ground. That thought had never occurred to me.

As 1942 progressed, there were more and more transports to the camps and to the ghettos. From one day to the other I didn’t know whether I would return home at night. At that time I was in the factory. Most Jews, indeed all who weren’t in the hospital, were at work in factories. It was difficult just to keep going. Every day at work you would hear something new. A coworker had been called up for a transport, or perhaps it was a friend in Berlin who had disappeared. My mother and I tried very hard to keep up our courage. There were many suicides. The woman I had

worked with in Dr. Hirsch's office committed suicide. People felt that if they were to die, they would rather die at home. Usually, they would hang themselves in the bathroom.

16.

In the Young Friends group I had become acquainted, and then become quite friendly with, a girl who was about two years younger than I, a girl who like me was half Jewish, but who had never been of the Jewish religion, and therefore was classified as *Mischling ersten Grades*. She was blond and blue-eyed, and quite pretty. She lived not far from us. We lived near the Pragerplatz, beyond which was her street, Prinzregentenstrasse. Together we went to the Young Friends group. Her name was Eva John. In 1942 she was still going to the Young Friends group. As a *Mischling ersten Grades* Eva could move about freely. I could no longer attend Meeting.

Another of my acquaintances was a young man called Herbert von Beaulieu. He was of Huguenot ancestry and was a devoted pacifist. He spoke fluent French and English. He had been to England, and now he was studying theology. His father had been killed serving as an officer in the First World War, and he had been brought up by his mother. All his family had been high military officers, and perhaps his pacifism was a way of protesting against his family. In 1940, when he came to the Young Friends, he was already in the army, but he had been on a study furlough for half a year. At that time the army was still lenient in this regard, allowing young men to study for a semester. It was during this furlough that he came to the Young Friends. At that time I was still active in the Young Friends. Indeed, I was more or less the one who ran the group. Herbert took quite an interest in me. For a time he wrote to me every day. I was very embarrassed, since I was Jewish and he was from an exalted military family.

We had a lot in common. He had read widely and was interested in intellectual and spiritual questions. When his furlough was up, he returned to the army, but since he was stationed close to Berlin, he could return home on weekends. He wanted to visit me, but I was frightened. So I would always invent some excuse not to see him. I would say, for instance, "I'm washing the kitchen floor today. I have no time." At that time I was working for my mother. Then I would say, "Have you seen Eva? Perhaps you should visit her." So I sent him to Eva, and this cemented my friendship with her. Gradually, a close friendship between him and Eva developed, one that later became intimate.

There were some other young people, two or three, who belonged to a circle of anthroposophists. The leader of that group was named Rudolf Pachali, and the group met secretly

at his and his wife's apartment. Two of these anthroposophists joined the Young Friends group. One was a girl name Gerda, and also a young man named Erwin Kloth. A third, one who didn't join the Young Friends but who was working behind the scenes to bring the two groups together, was Johannes Trojan. Johannes was also a student. He was studying philosophy, I think. He was stationed with Herbert.

For several years I had been acquainted a bit with anthroposophy and had read some books by Rudolf Steiner. But now my girlfriend Eva, who was going with Herbert, joined the anthroposophist group because Herbert was studying theology and was sampling everything of this sort.

One day in May, Eva had a party at her apartment, and she invited all the people in this circle. I, too, was invited. It must have been a Saturday. Since it was only across the *Pragerplatz*, it was easy for me to get there. It was at this party that I met Rudolf, the leader of the anthroposophist circle, for the first time. He didn't talk to me that day, but he remarked to Eva, "Is this your girlfriend Ruth? We are having a meeting tomorrow. Can she come?" "No," said Eva. "Because she is Jewish, and wears the star, she is not allowed out on Sunday."

Rudolf worked as a pharmacist in the army. He was stationed in Berlin, in a veterinary unit that took care of horses. I recall that he gave Eva some real soap and some grape sugar to give to me. At this party I also met Cornelia, Rudolf's wife, for the first time.

I also saw Erwin, who had been in the Young Friends. I found him attractive. He was kind, with gentle eyes. He was ten years older than I, and it seemed to me that he was friendly with Gerda, so I kept my distance and made no attempt to become closer with him. I realized later, however, that his relationship with Gerda was not what I had thought.

Erwin and I talked. We talked about the Young Friends, and he said that the group had lost its good organization since I had left. He asked whether he might visit me. "We could talk more about the Young Friends," he said. He was also not Jewish, but since I lived with my mother, and our household was officially non-Jewish, it was possible. So I assented.

As I was leaving the party—I had to leave early, since Jews had to be home at eight o'clock—I was in the hallway, alone. It was in May, so I don't think I could have been putting on my coat. Suddenly, Rudolf Pachali approached me. He took my hand and looked me deeply in the eyes, for the longest time not letting go my hand or his gaze. This made an impression on me, but it confused me as well.

Erwin Kloth visited me once a month or so. These visits made a big difference in my outlook. I now had the desire to live, after all. It was also through Erwin that I became closer to the Pachalis. Erwin told me that Cornelia had suggested that I visit them at their apartment and attend one of their anthroposophical meetings. And so I went. It must have been in autumn of 1942 that I went to the Pachalis for the first time. Of course, I had to hide my star—behind a pocketbook, a newspaper, anything. It was always a risk to do that, to hide the star. But I went.

17.

When I came to the Pachalis for the first time, I met Cornelia's mother. She had a strange history. When she was twenty-five years old she had a sudden mental and physical collapse. She spent a long time in the hospital and thereafter, though not completely paralyzed, could walk only with difficulty. She walked pushing a wheelchair. She looked at me with intense hatred in her eyes, and my first feeling was, "My God, I don't want to have anything to do with her." That was my introduction to the Pachalis. I was there only twice altogether before I went into hiding. Perhaps a third time—there may have been a party on Rudolf's birthday, on the eleventh of November. I may have been invited and have been there.

There were more and more transports. On my birthday, I think, on the first of December, Erwin visited me together with Eva and Herbert. My mother was there, too, but she went to bed early because she didn't feel well. Then Eva and Herbert left, and Erwin and I talked alone for a long time. We talked about angels. I had made a pudding, but I was so engrossed in our talk about angels that I completely forgot about it. We had had coffee, and cake or cookies, and Erwin didn't leave before midnight. It was a very nice evening. The next day I called him up to apologize. "I forgot the pudding," I said. "Yes," he replied, "I saw the pudding standing there and was wondering all the time, What is that for?"

A short time afterwards something occurred relating to one of my mother's students, a teenage boy who was, I think, studying both piano and accordion. This boy had many problems. He was an illegitimate child. His mother, a Frau Doktor Eberhardt, was a well-known astrologer. My mother had taken an interest in this boy, had talked with him and tried to help him to straighten out. And so contact developed between this boy's mother and my mother. Frau Doktor Eberhardt and the boy's father were Nazis. My mother told this woman about her Jewish daughter and asked about my horoscope. I saw her only once. She asked me what I wanted to know. I said that the only thing I wanted to know was, Am I going to survive? She said, "It looks as if the danger to

your life will be over in your twenty-fifth year.” Then she said to my mother, “Your daughter must leave now. If she wants to hide herself, she has to do so in the next two weeks. After the sixth of January she will be in very serious danger, and then it will be too late.”

We then began to look for a place for me to hide. I remember that at one point my mother sought out various people whom she knew. In particular, she went with me to a Quaker couple who she knew were active in helping Jews. The husband, Heinz Haagen, had been a communist, and had been arrested for some underground work early in the Hitler years. He was active in the Quaker Meeting and in helping Jews to hide. He said to me, “There are two possibilities. You can go to Prague, where I have connections. I can give you some addresses and contact to an underground movement in Czechoslovakia. The other possibility is Paris. I have some contacts there with the underground resistance movement who will help you once you get there.”

The problem, of course, was how to get there. How do you get from Berlin to Paris or to Prague if you are a Jew? In a train you were confined, and the military police could appear and demand of everyone to show an identity card. First it was only the Jews who had to have an identity card, with a big “J” on it. Later, everyone had to have one, with photo and fingerprints. So how was one to get to Prague, or to Paris? A couple of days later, Eva, I, and Herbert, and perhaps Erwin was there, too, were sitting in my mother’s bedroom. All of them were discussing how I was going to walk across the border at night into Czechoslovakia. They were hatching all these elaborate plans, and I was thinking, “Me, walk across the border? At night?” It was easier to think, “Let them pick me up and transport me. Let them kill me.”

I wasn’t particularly concerned, because in a way I didn’t want to hide or escape. I felt that I couldn’t do this to my mother. Meanwhile, I had been invited a couple of times to the Pachalis, who lived in the Schillstrasse, either number 7 or 9, I don’t remember exactly. The last time I had been there, I think, was at Rudolf Pachali’s birthday on November 11. Eva, my girlfriend, went there frequently to the anthroposophical evenings with Herbert. Rudolf was in the army, but with his veterinary unit stationed in Berlin, he was able to come home several nights a week.

Eva was also trying to help me. Once when she was at the Pachalis, she asked Cornelia Pachali to show her her identity card. There was a similarity between me and Cornelia, and Eva thought that perhaps I could have Cornelia’s card. Observing this, Rudolf immediately wanted to know what was going on. “What is it, Eva,” he said, “You’re hiding something.” Eva told him that they were looking for a place for me to hide, or a way for me to go to Prague, in which case I

would need an identity card for the train. Rudolf said, "She can come to us." He and Eva arranged for him to visit us to talk things over.

The Pachalis rented two rooms in a large apartment, larger even than ours. It belonged to a woman in her late seventies named Frau Dr. Stern, who occupied the front rooms and rented out several others. She was a strong and regal presence, but a benevolent one. She had been married to the son of Julius Stern, the founder of the Stern Music Conservatory and himself a Jewish musician and his father's successor. She was a voice teacher. She was not Jewish. She was very musical and had a large following of devoted students. She played the piano very well. Like my father, she often put on concert performances of operas with her students. She had known my parents, because some of her students had studied with my father as well, who coached them in the operatic repertoire.

Frau Dr. Stern had known me as a child, when my father's opera studio was still in existence and I was about fourteen or fifteen years old. She would have known me by sight, since my parents held numerous house concerts, to which many people came, and I would take the tickets. Rudolf had stated that I could hide in their rooms, but of course they needed Frau Dr. Stern's consent. Frau Dr. Stern was a fervent anti-Nazi. She agreed to the Pachalis' taking me in out of pure conviction.

In the front of this large apartment were Frau Dr. Stern's private rooms and the rooms where she taught. As old as she was, she was still giving lessons. She taught until her death, which was well into her eighties. Frau Dr. Stern's apartment, like many large Berlin apartments, featured large front rooms and a central "Berlin room" that served as the connector to the several other rooms.

Of the Pachalis' two rooms, one served as a dining and living room, and it also contained the bed on which Cornelia's mother, Frau Meyer, slept. The other room belonged to Cornelia and Rudolf, and it was also where the baby slept. Adjacent to that room was a large porch with a sofa. It was not glassed in, so it was unusable in the winter. Rudolf was the master in his household, and I don't think he consulted his wife and mother-in-law about my coming to live with them. Of course, he did have to consult Frau Dr. Stern. They called her "the Good Mother."

Between the Pachalis' two rooms was another room, where a young girl called Hansi lived. Hansi would have to be prevented from knowing that I was there, and that would not be a simple matter.

A few days later Rudolf came to visit me and my mother. He arrived dressed in his army uniform. I was frightened at seeing an army officer, but he said, "You'll have to get used to it." He acted as though he could think of nothing more pleasant than to have me move in with them. I think that already then his motives weren't entirely idealistic. At that time I was very naive. I was quite overwhelmed, especially at a time when even my next-door neighbors no longer greeted me because I wore the star. And then along comes someone who says, "Won't you please come live with us." We had never asked Rudolf to take me. He simply offered, and that was very reassuring for me. I can imagine how many Jews went from house to house, begging their friends to take them in and hide them. And very few did, as it was extremely dangerous. And so it was that there were very few Jews who in the long run survived in hiding. As he left that evening he said, "I would like to take you with me right now."

Hiding me would be dangerous. For Rudolf, being discovered might well have meant death, because he was in the army. He would have surely have been court-martialed, though at the time I didn't know this. I learned this only after the war.

18.

And so it was agreed that on the twenty-eighth of December 1942, which was a Monday, I would go as usual to the asbestos factory where I worked. But instead of going home in the evening I would go to Rudolf and Cornelia and disappear. I hardly knew them. It still seems to me remarkable that they had offered to hide me.

I know of several cases where individuals who had hidden Jews were caught, though I don't know of anyone in Germany who was killed by the Nazis for this "crime," though in Poland, for example, people were in fact killed for hiding Jews. But in Germany civilian offenders were seldom even sent to concentration camps, but rather to jail, which was, of course, much the better alternative. I know, for example, of a Quaker family who for a time had hidden a young woman who upon leaving them attempted to flee by train to Switzerland. Many Jews attempted to cross the Swiss border, and trains in that direction were under continuous surveillance. The young woman was caught; she was tortured, and then killed. Under torture she revealed the identity of the couple that had hidden her. Their names were Eva and Carl Hermann. Eva Hermann was charged with hiding a Jew, while Carl was accused of clandestine listening to the BBC, which was, of course, strictly forbidden. They were both sentenced to several years in prison.

In the middle of December, after we had already made plans for me to go into hiding, my mother received a letter from the *Reichsmusikkammer* (the same organization that had expelled my father), a letter that made it even more imperative that I leave home. My mother was informed by the officials of the *Reichsmusikkammer* that they had learned that she was harboring a Jewish daughter at her residence, and that unless this daughter moved out by January first, she would be expelled from her professional organization and thenceforth forbidden to teach music. I have no idea who it was that denounced my mother, though there was certainly no lack of such people.

Had I remained with my mother, she would have lost her profession and source of income. I was paid exceedingly little for my work in the factory, and that could not have supported us. And who knew for how much longer I would even be able to work before being picked up and transported to the East. But on the other hand, living with my “Aryan” mother was my only protection against deportation. I could have moved into a Jewish household, but then I would have had no protection at all and would have been subject even at home to being picked up and deported. This letter arrived just a month or so after we had received the letter from the Ministry of the Interior informing us that my mother’s application to have me declared *Mischling ersten Grades* had been rejected. That letter was the death knell of all our hopes, and so we already had been looking for a place for me to hide, especially since Frau Doktor Eberhardt, the astrologer acquaintance of my mother, had insisted that time was short. There was no reasonable alternative.

Throughout the years of terror my mother fought strenuously for my life. Whatever difficulties we may have had in years past, during this time of trouble we had become very close. My mother blamed herself that she had agreed to have me raised in the Jewish religion and that she hadn’t forcibly taken me out of it when Hitler came to power. And then, in 1939, when I was considering emigrating to England or to New Zealand, she had held on to me and not let me go.

I prepared to go into hiding. The risk of eventual discovery was great. Rudolf and Cornelia Pachali had offered to take me in, but remaining with them for any length of time—remaining in Germany for that matter—was clearly not going to succeed in the long run. We had agreed that I would hide with the Pachalis only until certain other arrangements could be made. After considering the alternatives, Rudolf had determined that the best plan was for me to flee to Paris by securing counterfeit documents. He had enlisted the assistance of my friend Herbert von Beaulieu, who worked at a military installation in Jüterbog, just south of Berlin. After the war I learned that he was in fact stationed in the *Führerhauptquartier*—Hitler’s central command. He was a *Funker*, a radio operator who worked with secret codes. I knew Herbert from the Young

Friends, and he was also involved with the anthroposophists. He was studying theology in preparation for the Lutheran ministry and was vehemently opposed to the Nazi regime, though the rest of his family were all quite militaristic and pro-Nazi. Indeed, it was a family tradition that all the von Beaulieu men serve as army officers.

The documents that Herbert was going to obtain for me were transit papers. He was going to acquire blank forms and fill them out, affixing my picture and a false name. These documents would identify me as an army nurse with orders to Paris. There was one other person involved in the plot, and that was Johannes Trojan, another member of the anthroposophical circle. Johannes had somehow acquired the *Arbeitsbuch*—the work papers—of one of his many girlfriends, whose name was Margarethe Schwendinger. Since Margarethe was about my age, this book could provide me with a further identifying document, and so the name “Margarethe Schwendinger” was chosen for me.

We liked the name Schwendinger because it didn’t sound at all Jewish. After the papers were completed and I was ready to depart, Heinz Haagen, a leading Quaker in Berlin who had for a time been imprisoned as a communist, would provide me with a contact in the French underground. When I arrived in Paris I was to find this person, who would help me to disappear.

That was the plan, but it was far from fulfillment, and the time for my going into hiding was rapidly approaching. Christmas Eve was on a Thursday, and so the asbestos factory was closed on Thursday and Friday and for the weekend as well, the fact that the country was at war notwithstanding. It was a very sad Christmas. We had a tree with candles, as always, but I don’t remember that we exchanged gifts, though I had sent many gifts to my acquaintances. Eva John was there; by now she was like a member of the family. Every time my mother and I looked at each other we began to cry. I felt that I was entering onto a path of endless sorrow whose only escape would be death. It was beyond the power of my imagining that the war would ever be over and that Hitler would ever disappear from this world. At the time, he seemed invincible. (We didn’t know then about Stalingrad. We began to learn about Hitler’s setbacks only in the spring of 1943.) At the outset, the German population had not been completely behind Hitler, but once war came, never mind you hated Hitler, you supported your country. That is how most people responded to the Nazis and to the war. Germany was united behind Hitler, and I felt very much alone and afraid.

After Christmas, Eva brought some of my clothes and other belongings over to the Pachalis’ rooms in preparation for my move. After all, I couldn’t wear anything unusual to work the last

day, and I could hardly show up at the factory carrying a suitcase. Monday morning arrived, December 28, and I left for the factory. Over my clothes I wore my dark-blue winter coat, with the Jewish star stitched onto the upper left side. I left the house as my mother sat weeping at the kitchen table. I arrived at the factory without incident and spent the day working as usual. Outwardly, the day was another dull workday, no different from any other, but all day long as I worked I was aware that I would never be returning here. I was more numb than frightened, though I was certainly frightened enough. The future opened before me—an empty chasm.

After work, I walked out through the factory gates as always, boarded the train at Reineckendorf Ost, and traveled to Bahnhof Zoo. From there I walked until I arrived at the apartment house in the Schillstrasse where the Pachalis lived. I stood before the building next door to where Rudolf and Cornelia lived and looked into the shop window. I could just faintly make out my reflection in the glass. It was very dark—the whole city was blacked out against the Allied bombers. I took out the little pair of scissors I had brought with me, and with them I carefully cut the stitches that connected the star to my coat. I put the star in my pocket—now I could enter the house. I opened the front door and walked the two flights up. I rang the doorbell—it was Rudolf who opened the door, and I entered the apartment. Rudolf said, “Cornelia isn’t here. A friend has invited her to attend a concert.”

I walked with Rudolf down the long corridor to their rooms in the back. In the first room to the right I saw Frau Meyer, Cornelia’s mother; the child, Regina, was asleep.

I can still see myself as I entered their room. I walked in, and I was thinking, “What am I doing to these people? By coming here I am placing them in terrible danger.” I don’t know what Cornelia’s mother was thinking, though I was sure that she was highly displeased to see me.

Rudolf, however, said simply, “I’d better show you how to make tea the way I like it.” He had quite a ritual for preparing tea, and as he instructed me in tea-brewing, Rudolf started complaining that his military duties as a pharmacist in the Berlin veterinary unit often kept him away from home for days at a time. I was stunned and replied, “But we’re at war. What do you expect? Men are fighting in Russia!” But no, Rudolf wanted to be with his family. I couldn’t understand how instead of being grateful for being stationed in the relative safety of Berlin he could feel so put upon because he couldn’t always be at home. I held Rudolf in very high esteem and was more puzzled than critical. Yet I felt that he was simply asking too much, given the situation. On the other hand, several of his friends, including Herbert von Beaulieu, had been granted a half-year

study furlough from military service; Rudolf had also applied, I believe, for such a leave, but it had been denied, and he felt deprived of something he considered his due.

The next morning, as I later learned, my mother went to the local police station, accompanied by a friend, Karl Westermeyer, the music critic of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, to inform them that her daughter had disappeared. At police headquarters my mother stated that her daughter had failed to return home from work the previous evening. The police officer simply crossed my name off the books—it was a common enough occurrence for a Jew to disappear. If a transport was ready to depart and there weren't enough Jews in the holding center, the police would go out and round up some Jews from the street—anyone who wore the star—to meet the transport's quota. And so a person might go to work in the morning and then never be heard of again. For that reason, it was relatively easy to go into hiding. The police certainly weren't going to assist my mother in finding her lost daughter. They had a pretty good idea where she was—that she was no longer of any concern to them. But if it was easy to go into hiding—if you could find someone to take you in—it was not easy to *remain* in hiding, for assigned to each apartment house was a party member with a list of all who were permitted to live there, and this individual was responsible for reporting irregularities such as an undocumented person on the premises.

My friends Herbert and Eva also went to the police station. They, too, reported that I had gone missing. Herbert, in a 1996 letter, writes,

I went with Eva John to the police commissariat in full uniform with stripes of rank and all, and with Eva I made a declaration that Ruth had not returned home, and that in the last days she had seemed heavy of heart, and that she had said, “Yes, I would like to rest where Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg rest, in the *Landwehr* canal.”

We wanted to put off a search by the police for as long as possible, and so I swore an affidavit—and appearing in my uniform I was believed—so that the police would conclude that Ruth had indeed taken her life.

Three days later was New Year's Eve, and we had a little get-together. Quite a few people from our anthroposophical circle were there. We lit a candle, and Rudolf gave a short talk. We sang a bit, too. It was peaceful and lovely.

A few days later, on the first of January, or perhaps it was the second, Rudolf came home with devastating news. He was being transferred to the Russian front. I was greatly distressed. It was

Rudolf who had planned and arranged everything, and now he was leaving for a very distant and uncertain future. I would never have gone to his family—these two women and a little child—and I am certain that they never would have taken me in of their own accord. Cornelia's mother resented me greatly. I felt I would be too much of a burden for them, and I regretted that I had come.

It was now only a couple of days until Rudolf's departure. He was the lawgiver in the family, and he determined that even in his absence I would remain, but that someone other than his wife or mother-in-law should take over responsibility for me. I believe, though Rudolf never told me this, that he spoke to several of his friends, asking them to look out for me. But no one was willing to do this, not Erwin Kloth, who was quite a fine person, but not a very strong person, nor Johannes Trojan, whose interest was really more in politics. (Johannes was connected with the *Rote Kapelle*, a group that maintained radio contact with Russia and passed along secret information. Most of that group were later caught, and all were hanged; Johannes's involvement was never discovered. He died, however, in a Russian prisoner-of-war camp.)

And so I remained. As the persecution increased, the hunt for Jews was concentrated more and more in the large cities, like Berlin and Vienna. It was almost impossible for a Jew to survive in a small town—where everyone knew everyone else—and those who could no longer exist there would eventually flee to the city. A few weeks after I disappeared there was a roundup of a large number of Jews who worked in factories. They were all transported to the East, to the extermination camps. (So, the astrologer had been right—time for me to go into hiding was short. Had she known through her Nazi contacts about the impending roundup?) At that time there were many Jews working in factories, all those Jews, in fact, who weren't old, infirm, or in hospital. And so in this roundup they collected most of the Jews remaining in Berlin, and that was quite a large number. They were rounded up and then held in a building in the Grosse-Hamburger-Strasse, a building that had been a Jewish school until the Nazis closed it. They were held there for several days, until a train was ready to leave. Each train held about a thousand Jews, and every day a train departed, a thousand people packed into cattle cars.

Even those who had "Aryan" spouses or parents were taken. That was something new. Up until now, Jews with non-Jewish spouses were not strenuously persecuted. The large number of mixed marriages—representative of the great degree to which Jews were assimilated into German society—was a problem for the planners of the "final solution." The arrest of a number of Jewish men in mixed marriages brought about the protest that became known as the *Rosenstrasse*

Fabrikaktion. The “Aryan” wives of these men demonstrated in front of the holding center in the Grosse-Hamburger-Strasse. They filled the street, remaining there for several days, refusing to vacate. The authorities were stymied. Finally, they let the men go.

I have read that some factory owners warned their Jewish employees about their impending capture, and as a result of these warnings there were now several thousand Jews in Berlin frantically searching for a place to hide. They had no ration coupons for food and no place to live. The Gestapo made a particular effort to hunt down these Jews, those who, as it was said, had “dived under.” Many tried to disappear, but only a very small number in all of Germany were able to hide for any length of time. The Gestapo had informers everywhere, and most Jews on the run were soon caught. From what I have read and learned from others, a Jew might be taken in by someone overnight, but then during the day he was on his own, on the street, without identification. The worst was for the men, who were easily spotted and apprehended, since it was expected that all men below a certain age were in the army.

My grandmother knew that I was in hiding, but she didn’t know where. All the details were kept from her, for her own protection. Eva John and Erwin Kloth maintained contact between me and my mother. My mother bought food for me on the black market and also gave my friends ration coupons with which they could purchase food for me. We were afraid at first that the Gestapo would search for me, but I was only one among very many Jews who were trying to disappear, and somehow the authorities never came to the Pachalis, nor to my mother’s apartment, in search of me.

Not many of the approximately 350,000 Jews in Germany at the time survived in hiding within the borders of Germany. It has been said that to survive you needed money, you had to be extraordinarily clever, and you had to have acute presence of mind, strong nerves, and a certain knack for deviousness. I had none of these.

One evening when Johannes Trojan was visiting, we destroyed my identity as Ruth Lilienthal. Our building was without central heating. Heat was provided by small, coal-burning tile stoves built into each room. We opened the small door in one of these stoves and burned my identity papers and also my permit to use the train. We opened up the little door and tossed in the papers, and that was the end of Ruth. Johannes turned to me and said, “Now you must rise like a phoenix from the ashes.”

Then Johannes decided that I should dye my hair to alter my appearance a little, and he took me to a hairdresser. It was February, and I had not been outside the apartment since the end of

December, and most of that time I had spent in one room. At the hairdresser he introduced me as his fiancée. I was given a henna rinse to put a reddish tint in my hair, and a new hairdo. Earlier, I had had very long hair that I wore in a bun at my neck, with the hair parted in the middle. It was simple, but a little severe. Then in 1940 I had cut my hair to about shoulder length and had a permanent wave. After I cut it, everyone in the Quaker meeting said to me, “How could you cut off that beautiful hair?”

After the henna rinse, the hairdresser straightened my hair. I remember her saying to me, “If you two have a child, wouldn’t it be wonderful if it had your fiancé’s long eyelashes.” We then went to a photo-automat to take pictures of me. This was to be the picture for the identity card to get me to Paris. That picture is still in existence. I look so sad, no matter I tried to smile.

Weeks passed while I was waiting for my false papers from Herbert and Johannes. It was now March 1943. Over the past few years several Quakers, including my friend Mitzi Jordan, in Wuppertal, had been sending food packages to families in the Lublin ghetto, where there were many Jews from Mecklenburg and Pomerania who had been sent to the ghetto on the first transports in 1940, or so I believe. In addition to sending food packages, Mitzi maintained an active correspondence with a number of people in the ghetto. One woman in particular had written several beautiful and uplifting letters from Lublin. These letters were copied by many hands and widely circulated. Herbert von Beaulieu was one of those who obtained copies of these letters. He, too, copied them and sent the copies to others. Foolishly, he mailed them from his army command, and one of his letters was opened by the military censors. He was arrested and charged with subversion against the army.

In a sense, Herbert was living a double life. He was an army officer, stationed in the *Führerhauptquartier*, but in his free time he was a pacifistic student of theology. He was renting a tiny room in my mother’s apartment where he left his books and where he could go on the weekends—whenever he was on leave. He also was carrying on a love affair with my girlfriend Eva, and this room is where they met. Moreover, it was here that Herbert was assembling my false papers and identity card. The work on these documents was, in fact, almost complete. All requisite signatures had been obtained, and all that was lacking was my picture. The papers were lying on Herbert’s desk in his room in my mother’s apartment at the time he was arrested. Fortunately for me and for him, immediately after Herbert’s arrest Johannes—who quickly learned of the arrest—went at once to Herbert’s room and removed the papers. Soon thereafter, the Gestapo arrived at my mother’s apartment and took possession of all Herbert’s books and papers. When

Johannes next came to visit he said, “Ruth, I have to tell you. I’m sorry. I burnt the papers. I had to act as Herbert’s friend, and he would have been condemned to death had they been found. In any event, he will be court-martialed, and the Gestapo will become suspicious of any documents emanating from his unit. You probably would have been arrested in the train.”

Then for days, for weeks, we waited in fear. Would the Gestapo learn about Herbert’s involvement in the anthroposophical circle and come knocking on the Pachalis’ door? If they did, I would be discovered. So instead of remaining in the Pachalis’ two rooms with Cornelia, her mother, and the baby, I sat all day in one of the front rooms, the rooms belonging to Frau Dr. Stern. The Gestapo might, of course, have come and searched the entire apartment. But it was a large apartment, and during the day the Good Mother gave voice lessons in her rooms and so always had students there. All day I sat, in fear, reading. Earlier, I had been working on my French, so as to improve my chances of surviving in France. I had studied French in high school, but I certainly wouldn’t have been able to pass as a native speaker, and I was certain that in France I would have been betrayed at once by my lack of linguistic competence. I was relieved, in a way, that I wouldn’t be going to France after all.

Every time the doorbell rang we trembled. Was it the Gestapo? We were certain that the military police would by now have made the connection between Herbert’s room in my mother’s apartment and the Jewish girl, her daughter, who had lived there. So we held our breaths and waited.

We waited and hoped. But amidst all the fear occasionally something pleasant happened. One day, Frau Dr. Stern came out of the room where she taught and into the adjoining room where I was sitting. “Guess who was just here with me!” she exclaimed. “It was Erna Gerhardt.” Erna Gerhardt was a woman whom my father had coached in his opera school for quite a few years while she was studying voice with Frau Dr. Stern. I knew her well, and she knew me. She had since married and moved away from Berlin—to Hanover, I believe. The Good Mother went on to relate that Fräulein Gerhardt had just told her that the happiest years of her life were those she had spent studying with her and with my father. She particularly mentioned my father. Of course, Erna couldn’t be allowed to know that I was sitting in the next room.

But happy episodes were rare. It was an emotionally painful time. I was particularly sad about the fate of Herbert von Beaulieu. He was a very nice young man, but not one about whom you could say that he had his feet on the ground. When you are stationed at the *Führerhauptquartier* you do have to be somewhat careful. And to think that from the central military command post he

had sent out all those antiwar letters. Herbert was court-martialed, and he served a long term in prison. It would have gone much worse for him, of course, had his contact with me been discovered. Herbert writes (1996):

I was arrested on 11 February 1943 in Zossen near Berlin at my military post because I had been distributing subversive letters, sermons, and other writings, and letters from the front among my friends and acquaintances.

It was a single recipient who was arrested during a search of his house, but what was found when his house was searched sufficed to bring me before the military court. On 16 April 1943 I was convicted by the court martial and sentenced to loss of rank, to prison (to be served after the war), and to guarding the eastern front in a penal brigade after serving in a prison camp. First I served two months in a military prison in Torgau and then in the prison camp of the detainees' division number 10 near Novorossiysk. Thus was I sentenced on account of my subversion of the military, and I did hard time in the penal system.

But I nonetheless came away with my life! When, after the war, I located the chief military judge Dr. Brandstetter, in Munich, this judge wrote to me, "You had extraordinary luck that I gave you such a light sentence. Serving in the penal battalion at least gave you a chance at survival. Dr. Freisler, of the People's Court of Justice, would have condemned you without further ado to death." That is certainly true, and many others have told me the same.

Nonetheless, it wasn't right that Chief Military Judge Dr. Elmar Brandstetter wrote in my conviction paper, "An increased punishment is especially to be recommended because Beaulieu feels himself both personally and spiritually drawn to Jewish-related circles."

The experiences and impressions of prison, detainees' camp, penal battalion on the Russian front—one did what one could to find a way out of these horrific circumstances. One needed nourishment, for one is always undernourished. In the Crimea, where it can often be tropically hot, I became sick with dysentery, and I had terrible intestinal bleeding. That was almost the end of me, until one of

my comrades suggested that since there was no medicine, I should fast. Despite the extreme hunger, to fast. And that is what saved me.

One was young then and wanted to live—to survive! And of course as a student of theology I was in no way prepared for such a raw and uncivilized life.

Herbert managed to flee with the retreating German troops into Austria, where he came into Allied hands. Claiming French citizenship—he was fluent in French—he was repatriated to France, where he eventually became a pastor in the Lutheran church. It was not easy, because the French didn't want a pastor in the French Lutheran Church who had fought against France in the war, and the German Lutheran Church in Paris had no use for a pastor who had deserted from the German army. He eventually married a French woman, and later I heard that he became terribly homesick and wanted to return to Germany to become a pastor there. But his wife was adamantly opposed to moving to Germany. They had two children, and he is still living in France. In a way, Herbert's decision to flee ruined his life, though of course he did survive the war—in Russia he probably would have perished—and he did not have to continue in Germany's program of extermination of European Jews.

My mother was a great help to me. She continued to buy food for me on the black market. She was teaching and earning a good living. Many people had money, and there was little to buy, since everything was rationed. So they spent it on music lessons. Occasionally, one or another of her friends who suspected that I was still alive would give her ration coupons. Eva and Erwin continued to act as go-betweens. They brought food and ration coupons, and every now and then a letter from my mother.

Finally, it seemed that the danger to me from Herbert's arrest had passed. The Gestapo never came to the Good Mother. From Russia, Rudolf wrote letters home to Cornelia. In one of those letters he referred to me as Rose, and that is the name that stuck to me throughout the time I was in hiding, until the end of the war. He wrote to me and to his wife that he was happy that I was still going to be with them. He wrote as though he expected me to stay indefinitely, until the war was over.

Now that my plans to flee to Paris and contact the French underground had fallen apart with the arrest of Herbert, I was wondering what was going to become of me. The plan had been that I would remain with the Pachalis only until I had obtained papers for Paris. France would have been

quite an adventure—an adventure of which I was terrified. Who knows what my life would have been like. But that plan had been abandoned, and we were now looking for an alternative.

My friend Erwin Kloth lived with his sister and her husband, whose name was also Erwin. His last name was Gebhardt, and so to keep the two Erwins apart he was called Gebbs. He was quite a ladies' man, even though he was married. One of his affairs was with a woman who worked in the underground resistance and who had already accompanied several people in their flight cross the border into Switzerland, over what was called the *Grüne Grenze*—the green border—because it went through the forest. So Gebbs arranged with this woman to take me out of Germany into Switzerland. I asked, "Who am I to her that she would want to help me?" "She may perhaps just want to get rid of a potential rival," Erwin joked. And so it was arranged that this woman would come to the Pachalis in two weeks' time to talk with me. But two days before our meeting was to take place, she was apprehended.

Around the beginning of March I learned that Cornelia was pregnant. I don't think Cornelia herself told me; I must have learned of it from her mother. I don't know why she was keeping it a secret. Cornelia didn't talk much; I would say that she was rather a secretive person. I now had even stronger feelings of guilt that I was endangering this young family. It was their second child. The girl, Regina, was by that time a year or a year and a half old. And now there was going to be another baby. For me to bring such danger into this family with two small children. But at this point where was I to go?

I had never wanted to go into hiding. I had had an intuition, a premonition, that I would find myself somewhere in hiding where after a while the people would tire of me, have had it with living in constant fear, with all the difficulties, the terrible risk, but they wouldn't be able to get rid of me, because my leaving would create an even greater danger for them. The likelihood that I would be picked up on the street was very great, since in Berlin especially there were police everywhere stopping people and asking for your identity card, and of course I didn't have one. There were even plainclothes police who did nothing but hunt for Jews. So here I was. They were stuck with me.

In the middle of May, Rudolf came home on furlough. Someone must have told us that he was on his way, because when the doorbell rang, we knew it was Rudolf. Cornelia went alone down the long corridor to answer the door, and later Rudolf reproached me for not having gone with her. He had particularly wanted to be received by both of us. That moment, I replied, was for the two of them alone. From early in our acquaintance I had been attracted to Rudolf, but I had always felt

that the attraction was only on my part. He reproached me for how thin I had become. German men don't like skinny girls! It was almost cruel of Rudolf to say this, because the fact was that I didn't dare to eat very much; I felt that the food belonged to his family. I ate only the absolute minimum to keep myself going. Earlier, I had suggested that my mother make a financial contribution for my food, in addition to providing ration coupons. She had already offered this. Rudolf declined this offer, but said, "Someday the bill will be presented to you." He may have been joking, but I still remember the feeling of foreboding his remark gave me.

During his visit home, Rudolf worked on some anthroposophical texts he had been writing. He would dictate to me, and I would type. I particularly remember one evening taking dictation on the subject of Lucifer. Every morning we would tell one another our dreams. The morning after that dictation, I reported a dream I had had about Lucifer. He was swarming over me, overwhelming me, and I was trying to push him away. I was rather naive for a woman of twenty-two, and I reported this dream without embarrassment, unaware of its implications.

I had learned quite a bit about Rudolf from his mother. She revered him greatly; indeed, she was somewhat infatuated with him. She viewed him as an important spiritual initiate with great tasks before him. I, too, saw him in this light. After all, hadn't he appeared from nowhere to save me, when no one else was willing to help? He had offered to take me in on his own initiative, when others like me would go from house to house begging for protection and to no avail. I revered Rudolf, as did many in the circle around him.

Rudolf remained for three weeks. He would often go out for the day with one or another of his girlfriends. In fact, one evening, one of them, a young woman named Gerda, arrived. She said to me, "Cornelia has invited me to spend the night." I realized afterwards that during this time Rudolf had been dropping hints that I, too, should become intimate with him. At the beginning of June the time came for Rudolf to leave. It was already warm, and I was sleeping outside, on the porch. On his last evening at home Rudolf said to me, "I will come to you tonight."

At the time, Cornelia went along with Rudolf's affairs. She was quite young and full of spiritual idealism. After the war, she would feel differently. Both in his personal relationships and in his leadership of the anthroposophical circle that had formed around him Rudolf exercised an almost hypnotic power over people. I recall an older woman, an anthroposophist whom I met in 1944 when I was living in hiding in Bückeburg. She told me that some ministers associated with the anthroposophical society had made a formal declaration that Rudolf was a danger to young people who hadn't fully developed their sense of self. I was at first shaken by this, but then I asked

myself, “Whom should I trust, the man who was the only one to have taken on himself the danger of protecting me, or these others. The choice was clear. Before Rudolf I had fallen in love quite a few times but had never been seriously involved with anyone.

Even after Rudolf left, the circle still met. We met about every two weeks. We would read something by Rudolf Steiner and afterwards have a discussion. Rudolf had wanted me to lead these meetings, which meant introducing the readings and leading the prayers for the living and the dead. Cornelia’s mother resented this. She was an old and seasoned anthroposophist, and I a green nobody. But Rudolf had written that I should lead, and his word was law. So what was I to do? I think that Rudolf didn’t want Cornelia’s mother to take over these meetings because he felt that she was out of tune with the younger people in the group. It seemed that now she was my enemy, and that was yet one more difficulty for me. I was at this family’s mercy, and I tried to behave in every way that would ingratiate myself to them.

On July 8 the baby was born. It was a little boy, and he was called Roland. Cornelia gave birth at home with the help of a midwife. The child was born at night. Frau Meyer and I were waiting behind the door outside the room, waiting to hear the child’s first cry. Then Rudolf’s mother, who had come for the birth from Kohlow, near Frankfurt an der Oder, bathed the child, and I stood beside her and watched. I had never seen a newborn before. Then the baby was dried, diapered, and placed in a carriage. Rudolf’s mother was a very warm person, and very religious. But I believe that she, like the rest of her family, excepting her husband, who was a Protestant minister, was a Nazi sympathizer. But I was sure that she wouldn’t denounce me.

Now the Pachalis’ small part of the apartment was in complete upheaval. During the day I helped as much as I could with the household, but in the evening I could not move about the apartment because Hansi, the young woman who lived in the room next door, was not to know that I was there. It helped that there were always young people visiting the Pachalis, and so it wasn’t unusual to hear an extra voice. Eva, Erwin Kloth and his brother-in-law Gebbs, and Gerda Berndt, they all came at various times, and often they would bring food. These people gave me a great deal of moral support. Nonetheless, when Hansi was at home I wasn’t allowed to go out of the room, except to run to the bathroom. In fact, I never saw Hansi. When the baby was born, there was so much to do that we never got to bed before midnight. At night I slept on the porch. It was summer, and the weather was fine.

19.

On the twenty-fourth of July Cornelia had her birthday. There was a small party, and on that day my mother visited me. I hadn't seen her, nor spoken with her, for over half a year. The twenty-fourth was a Saturday. My mother came with a bottle of wine for Cornelia and some gifts for her birthday. It was the last time I saw her. We talked for a while. She said, "Next week, I'm going away for a couple of weeks on vacation." She would be going to the Bavarian Alps, which is where she always went in the summer. My grandmother was already there. Then she told me that she had been to her doctor, the famous Professor Zahler, who was also, by the way, the personal physician of Göring. The doctor had told her that there was something wrong with her heart.

The weekend passed. Monday night I spent on the porch, as usual, but I couldn't sleep. I felt terribly lonely and sad. At ten or eleven the next morning the telephone rang. There was just one telephone for the entire apartment. Cornelia answered the phone and then returned without a word. She was a very taciturn individual. At midday we had lunch as always in the room where Cornelia's mother slept, which also served as a dining room. After the meal Cornelia said to me, "Ruth, I want to talk to you." We went into the other room. She said, "Ruth, your mother died this morning."

We eventually learned more details. On the previous day, Monday, the twenty-sixth, Mussolini had been arrested. My mother became terribly excited; she felt sure that this event marked the beginning of the end of the war, though of course the end was far away. There was a woman from out of town staying at my mother's at the time, the girlfriend of an acquaintance. In the middle of the night my mother had a heart attack. The doctor was summoned, and he came and gave her an injection.

This young woman came to me afterwards and talked with me. She told me that she had sat with my mother the whole night and had talked with her. My mother repeated over and over, "I can't die. I can't die. Ruth needs me." This woman, a stranger, had somehow appeared there at the end. Morning came, and at ten o'clock the woman who kept house for my mother came in with her breakfast, and then they saw that she was dead. She had apparently died in her sleep. It was a terrible shock to me.

I wanted to see her one last time, and I considered going at night to the apartment with friends. But that was impossible, because of the building superintendent. Our apartment at Pragerstrasse 20 was in the parterre, the ground floor, to the left. The superintendent had his little

apartment on the right. The front door had a bell that sounded whenever it was opened, and he would have heard it at night.

He was a cruel man, and the source of much trouble. There was a man in our building whom he didn't like, and he manipulated the elevator so that it fell to the ground with this man in it. The superintendent was arrested, and he ended up serving a prison sentence. When he came up for parole, his wife went to my grandmother asking her to sign a letter attesting to his good character. She refused. And so I knew that I would endanger others if I went. It made no difference to me any longer whether they caught me.

So I never saw my mother again. And I had seen her just three days before. Nor could I go to the funeral. My mother belonged to no church. She had been baptized a Protestant, raised by a Catholic, and had converted to Judaism when she married Papa. But after my father died she resigned her membership in the Jewish community, and now she was nothing. My grandmother was away in the Alps and had to be summoned, so the funeral was not held until later. My mother was buried in the *Waldfriedhof*—the Forest Cemetery—way out of town, since this was the only nonsectarian cemetery in Berlin.

No minister was willing to perform the service, and at the funeral Erwin Gebhardt—Gebs—conducted the funeral and gave the eulogy. He had become quite friendly with my mother. He was also an anthroposophist, as were all the people around us. Later, we held a little memorial service in the apartment. We read some passages from the Bible, and some poems. Frau Dr. Stern played the piano and sang songs by Schubert.

Nevertheless, I couldn't really mourn the loss of my mother. I was in painfully difficult circumstances, with people I hardly knew. I was seldom alone in those crowded quarters, with two other women and two small children. There was little room for sorrow, and I had to do my best to show a cheerful face as much as possible. Surrounded by these people I just couldn't sit there and cry. I had to suppress my feelings, and that was difficult. The wounds couldn't heal. Though the relationship with my mother had not been an easy one—it was a relationship full of ups and downs and great problems—still, she was the closest person I had in the world.

At the beginning of August my thumb became infected. Of course, I couldn't go to a doctor. Fortunately, after a couple of days it got better on its own. It was at this time that Cornelia spoke with me to tell me that her mother wanted to leave Berlin and go with her and the two children to Bückeburg, a small town in the western part of Germany, to live there with her mother. Cornelia's grandmother, her mother's mother, rented a couple of rooms in a large house in Bückeburg, and

she had arranged with the owner, an aristocratic lady, also an anthroposophist, to rent a room to her daughter that had become available. Many people were leaving Berlin at this time because the bombing had started.

Cornelia asked me what I thought about their leaving, and what I would do. I said to her, "I want you to do what you think is right, and I don't want you to consider me. If you think there is safety in Bückeburg for you and the children, then that is where you must go. You can't think about me." And so they decided to leave. I helped them to pack their belongings, and after they were gone, I packed another large suitcase with some things they hadn't been able to carry, and Erwin brought it to the railroad station.

I remained alone in the apartment with Frau Dr. Stern, the Good Mother. I stayed with her a while, but I couldn't stay there for long, and yet I didn't know where to go. My mother, who had always supplied me with food, was no longer there, and Cornelia, on account of her two babies, always had extra ration cards. That was gone, too. Sometimes, friends brought some food, but it wasn't much. And now Frau Dr. Stern, too, wanted to leave Berlin.

I spoke with Erwin. I knew that he was keeping poison in his house, and I asked him to give me some, in case I was arrested. But he replied, "I specifically gave Rudolf my solemn word that I wouldn't give you any poison."

Soon Frau Dr. Stern was invited to friends of hers, former students, in East Prussia, and she was preparing to depart. The air raids had not yet become very severe at that time, but they were becoming worse. My mother had told me that after one air raid, she emerged from the shelter to see a dead man in the doorway. During the air raids everyone went down to the cellar. Except me, of course, since those in the shelters were carefully checked against the official lists. So I remained upstairs in the apartment.

But there was a problem as well with remaining upstairs. In every house there was a party official whose responsibility it was to inspect the entire building after each air raid to look for incendiary bombs. These were, silent small devices that did not explode. You didn't know it was there until it was too late, until it had started a fire. So someone had to go through the entire five- or six-story house and search every room in every apartment. One air attack came so close that the pressure from the blast threw me out of bed onto the floor. Everyone else was in the cellar, of course. There was a knock at the door. It was the inspector looking for incendiary bombs. I held my breath. He, of course, wanted to come in, but I had locked the door and dared not open it. He

knocked several times; then his footsteps departed. How long would my luck hold out? I realized how unsafe I was. Sooner or later, I would be discovered.

Someone contacted Ludwig Zeise, the man who had once thought about renting a room in my mother's apartment. He and his friend, Erika, had finally found an apartment, one that had been occupied by a Jungian analyst who had committed suicide. I had met Dr. Zeise at my mother's, and Erika had come to one of the anthroposophical meetings and had met me there. It was Dr. Zeise who had put into my mind the idea that maybe God wanted me to fight for my life. He was out of town, but Erika, who was alone, offered to take me in. It was very courageous of Erika to do this. She had hidden another young girl previously, and that girl was later caught. Erika told me that one day shortly after the girl's capture, the doorbell rang—and in those days the doorbell ringing was a terrible thing; you didn't know who might be there—and it was the Gestapo. The policeman held a jacket out to her and said, "This is yours." It was a jacket she had given to this girl. He could have arrested her, but he didn't. And that is typical of what happened during that time. Enforcement was arbitrary; there were some officials who wouldn't persecute people. It was several weeks after this event that Erika took me in.

It must have been the eighth or ninth of September when I went to her. Or perhaps it was the sixth. Erwin took me there in the evening, in the dark. We traveled on the subway. I had hardly ever been out of doors the past half year, and I was very frightened. We rode quite a distance, out to Treptower Park, number 18, I think. Erika welcomed me, and then Erwin left.

I arrived in the evening, and the next morning I had a bit of a sore throat. By noontime I couldn't swallow, and I had a high fever. Erika was new to this area and didn't know any physicians. She left the apartment and walked until she came to a sign indicating a doctor's office, went in, and asked him to come. The doctor arrived. By now I couldn't talk. It was already evening. The doctor took one look at me and said, "She has diphtheria. She must go to the hospital immediately." I looked at him pleadingly. Erika said, "She has just lost her mother. Can't she stay here?" After some discussion, he assented. He gave me an injection. I still remember him standing over me and saying, "Six hundred of the horse. Six hundred. Remember that. I gave you 600 cc of horse serum." I was only half conscious for the next several days. Every day, Erika called the doctor to report on my condition. My throat was so swollen that I was unrecognizable. Finally, I was able to spit. Erika called the doctor with this news, and he said, "Thank God!" As I gradually recovered, I could begin to take food.

Thinking back on this whole experience, it has become clear to me that this was an almost miraculous situation. What if I had planned on going to Erika a day later and had become ill at Frau Dr. Stern's? The Good Mother was a good and courageous person, but I don't think she would have known what to do with me if I had come down with diphtheria. She probably would have said, "You'll feel better tomorrow." And by then I would have been dead. It's amazing how tightly everything seems to have been orchestrated. But then it had to seem that way. The story of every Jew who survived those years must seem miraculous, until you set alongside it the millions whose stories ended in capture, deportation, and a terrible death.

Erika, on the other hand, was a very energetic young woman in her late twenties. She had the courage simply to go and fetch a doctor. When after three days the doctor heard that I was beginning to recover, he told Erika that when he had examined me, my throat was already black, and that was a bad sign. I had had only a slim chance of recovery.

A week or so later, Ludwig Zeise returned to Berlin. By this time I was already much better, but I was still very weak. Dr. Zeise had known my mother, and I remember how he talked with me during this time, telling me that it would be particularly difficult for me to work through my disengagement from her, now that she had died. Some of what he said must have hit a nerve, because I fainted.

These were people I hardly knew. Dr. Zeise I had previously seen just once, and I had met Erika only once previously as well. And yet here I was in the midst of their lives, bringing great danger to them. But they were completely unperturbed. Dr. Zeise wanted me to get outdoors some, but I was terrified to go out on the street. I remember once they practically forced me to go with them to a concert, a performance of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. The concert was in a large church. There were thousands of people there, and every seat was full. I could not enjoy the music because I was terribly frightened among so many people. And so from the *Kyrie* right through to the *Agnus Dei* I sat trembling with fear.

Ludwig Zeise was forever reproaching me that I was running away from life. Afterwards, after the war, I thought about his words, and I felt that his reproach was unjustified. I had just recovered from a serious illness, and it took a long time to recover. He would say, "You're sleeping too much." I know of those who even after mild cases of diphtheria were ordered by their doctors to convalesce at home for eight weeks. Four weeks after my recovery I would again be on the move.

Once, a man came to visit, a close friend of Dr. Zeise. He was a lieutenant colonel in the army who happened to have been Herbert von Beaulieu's superior at the *Führerhauptquartier*. He knew about me, that I was here in hiding, though I don't think he knew that I was a friend of Herbert's. This man, too, was an anthroposophist. The conversation turned to Herbert, and this lieutenant colonel remarked that it had been exceedingly foolish of him to have sent those letters, because he had brought his whole unit into danger. This man had just returned from a trip to Sweden, where he had been negotiating on behalf of the German government for the purchase of a quantity of steel. And now he announced that from Sweden he had brought real butter, and it was for me. Now, nobody had much to eat then, and so of course I wanted to share his gift with the others. But he said, "I brought the butter for you. Eat it now or I'll take you over my knee and spank you."

As I continued to recover, Erika took me again to the doctor, whom I had seen only once. His office was just a couple of houses away. We arrived, and to my horror I saw that the walls were covered with SS posters. I was terribly frightened. We sat in the waiting room looking at each other, and I was thinking that I would just run away. The doctor examined me, and my heart was racing. He said, "Calm down, it's not so bad." He told me that my heart had been damaged, and that I needed extra food rations, which he could prescribe. He told me to return the next day with my documents and he would write the prescriptions. I never returned, of course. That was in September 1943. In the 1960s I met two Jewish women from Germany, from Berlin in fact. Wolff was their family name, and they were sisters. One was a social worker and the other a doctor of public health. We talked, and I told them about the episode of my diphtheria. The doctor of public health told me that the physician who treated me must certainly have known that I was a Jewish girl in hiding, because the health laws in Germany were very strict, and every case of diphtheria had to be recorded at the center for contagious diseases. The apartment would have to have been quarantined, and the patient wasn't allowed out of the apartment until three cultures had returned negative. So, not only had the doctor known, but by violating the health laws he also had taken a considerable risk. What would they have done with my body if I had died?

The air raids continued, and they were getting worse. I was worried that my continued presence would put these good people in danger. The apartment where we were living was on the fourth or fifth floor. While I was still very weak, during the air raids two people would carry me down the flights of stairs to the basement. It was a large building, with many residents. The air raids were frequent, and the Zeises were new here. This made it possible for me to be in the shelter—as if I were visiting and had been caught in the attack. But when would my documents be

demanding? I knew that I couldn't stay much longer. It would soon be time for me to leave. During the weeks after my mother died, I lived as though in a trance. When I recall that time now, I think it is a miracle I didn't try to kill myself.

20.

Cornelia had written to Rudolf that she had left Berlin and had gone to Bückeburg with her mother and the children. Neither Cornelia nor her mother had suggested that I travel with them to Bückeburg. Rudolf was furious when he learned that I had been left alone in Berlin. He wrote an angry letter to me, and I think I learned later that he also wrote to his mother-in-law, or perhaps it was to his wife. I was now completely on my own.

What Rudolf had written to me was that he had not wanted Cornelia to go to Bückeburg, but rather to Kohlow, a village to the east near Frankfurt an der Oder, where his parents lived. At that time the eastern part of Germany was relatively safe, because the air raids were confined to the western part of the country. Indeed, many women and children were being evacuated to the east. Frau Dr. Stern, for example, left to stay with the family of a student of hers in East Prussia. She left Berlin after the building where we had lived was destroyed in the air raid of 22 November 1943. At the end of his letter to me Rudolf apologized for his angry tone. After all, he wrote, I couldn't have done anything about where his family went.

As a result of these letters my friend Eva received an invitation for the two of us to spend a couple of weeks with Cornelia and her family in Bückeburg. I never felt any particular fondness for me from Cornelia or her mother. Perhaps Cornelia liked me somewhat in her own way, but she was an extremely withdrawn person, particularly when she was young. Who knows what she felt? We were to leave on the eighth or ninth of October, and I expected to stay in Bückeburg for several weeks, perhaps as many as four. One couldn't make definite plans in a situation like mine. I planned on returning soon to Berlin. In the end, I remained in Bückeburg for ten years.

From Berlin to Bückeburg was a six-hour journey by train. You headed west from Berlin, passing through many small towns, until finally you arrived at Hanover. The train then continued for about an hour and a half westwards to Bückeburg. Eva and I arranged to travel together. She had made plans for taking her two-week vacation from work. When the day for our departure arrived, Eva picked me up at the Zeises, and we went together to the station. I had packed a large, brown suitcase with a few of my belongings and some of the Pachalis' clothes that they hadn't taken with them.

The train was scheduled to depart Berlin at nine in the morning and to arrive in Bückeburg at about three in the afternoon. We bought our tickets without incident and boarded the train. It was frightening for me to be traveling, since I had no papers. But being with Eva afforded me a certain protection—she was blond and blue-eyed. The train was packed. Across from us in our compartment sat an SS officer, which was frightening enough, but to make matters worse, Eva at once began to flirt with him. I thought I would die of fright. Eva and I have had little contact in the last thirty years. But recently she wrote to me, and in her letter she brought up the subject of the SS officer: “The officer said to us, ‘You’re arrested,’ which was how *he* started to flirt with *me*.” I have no such recollection, though I think I would have remembered if I had heard “you’re arrested” from an SS officer! It seems to me that Eva is anxious to improve her status in these events, to appear a more virtuous person than she is.

There was a good chance that no one would ask to see our documents. The military police were hunting primarily for deserters, since by this time there were so few Jews left in Germany. Jews were being hunted primarily on the trains to Switzerland. But after a while we saw an officer of the military police approaching. He could be identified by a large, metal plaque hanging from a chain around his neck. On account of this chain these officers were called *Kettenhunde*, which literally means a dog kept on a chain and hence a watch-dog. I hastily disappeared into the bathroom and locked myself in. I remained hidden until we had made stops at several stations, and then I emerged from the lavatory.

Suddenly, the train stopped. It stood motionless on the tracks a long while. Rumors began to circulate that there had been another air raid in Hanover and that the train was being rerouted around the city, which was in flames. Hanover had a large defense industry on account of which it suffered many air raids, though news of them was never publicized; we had no idea at that time how severe the bombing had been.

The day lengthened into night. For hours at a time the train sat immobile on the tracks. Perhaps the tracks had been bombed out farther down the line. Then we would progress a bit. Late at night we stopped at a station—I don’t remember where—and we were all let out of the train. In the station hall where we all gathered were representatives of the Red Cross. We had to write down our names and where we came from. When my turn came I wrote “Margarethe Schwendinger,” because I had her work papers with me. We were given something to drink and some sandwiches.

After a time we were put into another train, and we continued our journey, finally arriving in Bückeburg very late at night. Eva and I were the only ones to depart at Bückeburg. We walked out of the station and into the town. There wasn't a soul on the street, and we were glad of that.

Cornelia had sent Eva directions to her house—we had never been in Bückeburg. We walked through the darkness for half an hour or so, from the station to the house in the Georgstrasse where Cornelia lived, at number 3a. A wide stone staircase led up to the front door. We climbed the stairs and rang the bell, and out came Cornelia. She was not, as a rule, a very demonstrative person, but she was so relieved to see us that she fell on our necks and cried, "I thought you had been arrested. I was so worried!" She had had no news of the air raid over Hanover, for such news was never broadcast. We, too, were relieved finally to have arrived. We were very tired.

We slept well into the next day. When I awoke, I was introduced to Cornelia's grandmother, Frau Meyer's mother, and the first thing I noted about her was her sympathy for the Nazis. It was always, "*Unser Führer*" this, and "*Unser Führer*" that. She was in her eighties and was a very rigid old woman. She disliked me at once. Perhaps she knew or suspected who I was. She wouldn't, of course, have put her own daughter and granddaughter into danger by denouncing me. She was a very critical person, one who disliked most people. She was very tall, quite thin, with thin white hair and thick glasses. She was almost blind. She was a very imposing figure. Clearly, it was she who ran the household.

Frau Meyer apologized for her mother's incivility: "My mother cannot abide people who are sick. Don't ever say you don't feel well, or that you are tired." Cornelia's mother further told us that we needed to be away from the house as much as possible. I should have stayed at home, because I needed rest. It was just four weeks since I had almost died of diphtheria. "If you stay inside and lie down, my mother will be angry," Frau Meyer said.

There was a difference in my situation and Eva's. I was in hiding, weak after a serious illness, running for my life. Eva, on the other hand, was on vacation, and she wanted to hike in the hills. So we hiked. We went to the Weser Bergland, the hilly region around Bückeburg—a beautiful landscape of hills, forests, and meadows around the Weser valley, named for the river that runs through it.

Every morning we took a short ride on the local train, and then we would hike all day. One day we went to the *Externsteine*, which are the remains of a pre-Christian Germanic place of worship. Another time we journeyed to the *Porta Westfalica*. Thus we spent our days. Usually, Eva and I went alone together, and sometimes Cornelia joined us. On the whole, it was a very

happy time, though I wasn't really up to so much activity, but we had to be out of the house so that the old lady wouldn't see us.

The first weeks in Bückeberg were a bit of a respite for me. For the first time in a long time I didn't feel in constant, immediate danger. Cornelia, Eva, and I, we were just a trio of young girls, and I think we didn't draw much attention to ourselves. There were many strangers in the area—refugees from the cities and some tourists as well. Where we went hiking there were few other people. Although I was terribly weak, the walking was good for me after being cooped up in Berlin in constant dread.

One day, Eva said, "Let's visit the *Kalendermann!*" Like thousands of German children, Eva and I had been faithful childhood readers of *Auerbach's Kinder-Kalender*, a sort of children's almanac that came out every year. It had stories, poems, and pictures. The editor, Dr. Adolf Holst, lived in Bückeberg and was well known throughout Germany as the "Calendar Man." He was known also as a writer of children's books and children's poetry. In his calendar he always encouraged his *Kalenderkinder*, as he called his readers, to visit him. Eva wanted to visit him, but I, terrified at the prospect, didn't want to meet or talk with anyone. I was frightened even to leave the house. But Eva prevailed, and we went. We knocked on the door and were shown in. Adolf Holst was very gracious. Yes, we answered, we were two of his calendar children, who had faithfully read his calendar. He then asked each of us, "When were you born? What are your birthdays?" I sat mute, not knowing what to say. Should I give my real birthday, December 1, or should I invent another date. I was paralyzed. Dr. Holst looked at me and laughed, "She doesn't even know her own birthday?"

All in all, living on the outside under a different name was much more anxiety-producing than the first three-quarters of a year in hiding had been, during which I had lived in a home—in two different homes—and had had no contact with the outside world. Now going outside and constantly facing people was excruciating. Whenever someone would look at me, I would think, "This person sees that I look Jewish." I didn't look outspokenly Jewish, but I looked Jewish enough. The population of northern Germany was quite homogeneous, and my dark eyes, dark hair, and prominent nose, I am certain, called attention to me. In the course of even the most casual social interactions I would have to answer questions about my family, about the past.

Eva's two-week vacation came to an end, and she returned to Berlin. What was I to do now? Where was I to go? I could not remain long with Cornelia. In the nearby village of Petzen, about an hour's walk away, lived a young woman named Hannah Mensching, with whom I had

corresponded in my role as clerk of the Young Friends. Her father, Wilhelm Mensching, was a pastor and had connections to pacifist organizations, in particular the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He also had contact with American Quakers. He was also known for his anti-Nazi sympathies. Because of his pacifism and outspokenness against Hitler he was in some danger. But he was largely supported by the people in his community.

Hanni was about my age, and we had corresponded for a couple of years, up until I went into hiding. We had never met. It is possible that Eva contacted Hanni. I really don't know how it happened, but the Menschings invited me to stay with them. Perhaps it was through Greta Sumpf, a Quaker in Berlin much liked by the young Quakers. She had been a teacher in Bavaria in a small village, but having refused to take the oath of loyalty to Hitler, she was denounced and fired from her job. She then moved to Berlin, where she gave private lessons. She was a very upright and deeply religious person. I had been in contact with her, and she was a friend of the Menschings. But how would she have known that I was in Bückeburg? We were careful not to let people know where I was. I faintly recall that Greta came to visit me once at the Menschings. She didn't come to the pastor's house. We met in a meadow somewhere outside the village. That is how careful we were. Or perhaps it was I myself who contacted Hanni.

Pastor Mensching had made anti-Nazi statements from the pulpit, and there were party members in the village who had their eye on him. So it was quite courageous of them to take me in. He was married, and the couple had four children. The oldest were twin boys, one of whom, Fritz, was a medical doctor. He had already fought in the war and had been wounded—an injured leg, I think. Because of his injury he was no longer at the front, but was working in a hospital in Hanover. On weekends he visited his parents. He and his twin brother had been born in Africa, at a time when Pastor Mensching was serving as a missionary there. When they were babies, the brothers contracted encephalitis. Fritz was unaffected, but his brother became blind, and also mentally retarded. He lived with his parents, a very sweet and good person. Next was Hanni, and then the youngest, Ernst, who was the particular favorite of his father. He was about seventeen years old. He was drafted into the army and was killed in combat.

The vicarage was a large house, and in residence were also Pastor Mensching's wife's sister and her daughters, who had fled from Bremen.

Wilhelm Mensching did not like me much, I think. Once, he lectured me on how I didn't help enough in the household. I was terribly weak then. But he was possessed of a certain moral rigidity, like many Germans. And the work was terribly demanding. The household technology

was very primitive. There was a pump to bring water to the kitchen. Just to move the handle required all my strength. The clothes-washing was a complex affair involving heating quantities of water on the stove and then boiling the wash to disinfect it. The entire process took three or four days to complete. I was able to do only a little dusting and to help out a little here and there. In retrospect, I think Pastor Mensching's judgment was too harsh. Those who are strong and healthy are not always able to understand that there are those who are weak.

There was also a Russian girl, named Adela, in the household. In essence, she was a slave. German soldiers in occupied countries would simply abduct young women and send them by train to Germany as domestics, farm hands, or factory workers. Adela worked with the strength of ten, it seemed. After the war, she returned to Russia, likely to be sent to the Gulag for having seen a better life in Germany.

The Menschings were friendly with a couple of women, sisters, who ran a home in Bückeburg for wayward girls, or perhaps it was for orphans. Once Hannah Mensching took me there for a visit, and afterwards, I sometimes went there on my own. They held evening programs where they sang—this was a very religious Protestant group—and the girls made crafts to give to poor children at Christmas. On one of those evenings, it was November 17, they were preparing for Advent and Christmas. We spent the evening painting little dwarves that had been cut out of wood and working on other crafts as well. About eight o'clock or so it was time for me to walk home. The journey took about an hour over a lonely, unpaved road that led from Bückeburg to Petzen. The road was completely deserted.

As I was walking my legs began to feel heavier and heavier. Walking became more and more difficult. I slowly made my way homeward by walking to the nearest tree by the side of the road, supporting myself against the tree to recover my strength, and then trudging on to the next tree. Thus I stumbled along. I arrived home at last and went to bed. When I awoke, I discovered that I had become paralyzed in both legs. There was no feeling in them. First it was the lower part of my legs. Then the numbness rose to the knees, and gradually up my legs until I could no longer stand.

I was confined to my bed. Hanni took care of me, and also her mother, who was very kind to me, and the grandmother as well, whose birthday was the same as mine. When Fritz came home for the weekend, he examined me and discovered that my heart was damaged. He brought me medicine to treat that condition. But he could do nothing about my legs. The family began to worry that I would die on them. One day, Hanni told me that they had chosen a place to bury me—in the back yard under the big oak tree. I could see the tree from my window.

One evening, I heard a commotion downstairs, loud, angry voices. It was the Gestapo for sure. I was lying in bed in a panic. I couldn't move. I had a small address book that I didn't want to fall into anyone's hands. Beside my bed was a small, black wood-burning oven for heating the room. I pulled myself up and threw the book into the oven, together with some pictures. The talking continued for about half an hour. Then Hanni Mensching came upstairs. "What is it?" I asked. "Oh, it's just some French prisoners of war."

21.

In November there were severe air raids in Berlin. On November 22 there was a particularly heavy air raid, during which the entire neighborhood where I had lived was destroyed. The house at Pragerstrasse 20 was completely gone. Practically the whole street was wiped out. The house in the Schillstrasse where I had lived with the Pachalis was also destroyed. In some places you could see down through what had been the street right into the subway.

We received a letter from Frau Dr. Stern addressed to Henny (Frau Meyer), Nenchen (Cornelia), and Rose (me):

To the dear three of you!

I am alive! I am amazed that I am alive; it would be hard to imagine anything more terrifying, horrible, or dreadful than what we experienced.

It was your great good fortune that you were there [in Bückeburg]. Henny, you would have been doomed to death, and perhaps Nena [Cornelia] and the children as well. Shortly after we came into the cellar, the house began to shake, and the bombs struck from above. The civil air defense guard ordered us to be quiet, took all the men with him upstairs, and ordered us to remain seated. It wasn't yet eight o'clock. He then assembled the women and girls as well, and could no longer conceal the truth, that already everything was in flames as far as Fräulein Flöter's. "The Sterns can still rescue something," he said. The women rushed upstairs (the sisters-in-law had come down to the basement after the first explosion with the help of two men). The women were carrying this and that of their possessions and said that there was so much smoke that it was no longer possible to enter. The civil air defense guard was still not letting us go up. Strangers came in all excited. "The entire block of buildings is burning!" I

demanded that the passages into the neighboring houses be broken open—but it was already too late. We could no longer exit our own building.

Frau Raabe's apartment and the corridor were burning. There was still the passageway to Buchwald's house, way in the rear of the cellar. That worked, and we were dragged through the opening, even Dora, and there we stood, with no flames, in the other basement. There were a few steps leading upwards, a small bit of courtyard to traverse, and then we were outside—the young girl who was with me and I; I believed that the aunts were coming slowly behind us. I didn't anticipate what was now transpiring.

The Schillstrasse was a sea of fire; from across the way thick flames beat across toward us. The storm produced by the heat swept flaming sparks at us; I had my wet bath sheet wrapped around me, a blanket on my arm, and my handbag. The young girl had her two little suitcases and my coat with the Persian lamb collar. We had to abandon the coat and throw away one of the suitcases; with pain and difficulty we fought our way through to Lützowplatz. We passed through a firestorm; we made our way almost blind; the girl had to drag me; electric wires drooped almost down to the ground—but we arrived at the square. I don't think I would have made it without Hanni. Wanda and Anneliese didn't concern themselves with me in the least. They ran ahead of us out of the building and to the right, then came back and shouted only, "You can't get through that way!"

At Lützowplatz we battled our way to Hercules Bridge, where we encountered a number of unfortunates sitting there. It must have been about half past ten when we got across; I don't know exactly. We sat there until five o'clock! Those hours defy description.

The entire Lützowplatz was a flaming torch! We were showered with black clouds of dirt with a rain of fire; one building after the other tumbled down with fiery heat coming at us. Women called out for their husbands, husbands for their wives. One woman cried out in pain for three hours; her legs were burnt. "Shoot me dead!" she cried. Then an ambulance appeared, and she was taken away. One mother had lost her three children in the firestorm, and had one beside her. Afterwards, though, she found them all. Most of the people sat rigidly and said

nothing. I sat all those hours on Hanni's little suitcase, my head on her shaking legs, the wet bath towel and the red cover over my head.

If you turned up your head to look at this grisly drama, then your eyes would be pelted with filth. The air was black, with red sparks; you could hardly breathe. I didn't believe that we would survive the ordeal. Some people attempted to go into the Lützowstrasse, but it was impossible. Everything was burning. You simply gave yourself over to fate. Then came another alarm; but we couldn't move. At five o'clock in the morning a policeman came along and said, "Line up two by two; we want to try to get through the [indecipherable] and Derfflinger streets to the Bachsaal." It was a terrifying passage. I held fast to a man, since Hanni had become almost blind. He hurried, so that I fell. The storm and burning ashes were pursuing me. We arrived—praise God! My only thought was to see Lotte again alive—everything else was irrelevant. You couldn't telephone, nor could you go anywhere; everything was closed off; it became more and more crowded. Doctors were treating injured eyes; bread and coffee were handed round.

There was no one there from the Schillstrasse. Later, we heard that the school in the Derfflingerstrasse was also an assembly point—I said nothing; I didn't complain; I thought only of Lotte; suddenly it was eleven o'clock. I heard voices rejoicing. "There she is!" Lotte, Lilo, Klaus. We threw ourselves crying into one another's arms—but they were tears of joy! Lotte must have been on her feet for ten hours. During the night they came by a circuitous route almost to here, but then had to retreat because passage was impossible. When it became light they went on again. But they believed me lost when they saw how horrific everything appeared. They inquired, battled their way through, and found me. Now all was well.

They left me in the Bachsaal and went to the police, in order to ask about further possibilities to look for the missing. It was a question of finding Dora and Anna. They couldn't find them anywhere. They must have remained behind in the house and suffered a miserable death. Terrible, hopeless! Likewise Irene, who was also in the Bachsaal, knew nothing of the whereabouts of her mother and

grandmother. She had just celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday. God grant that they still be alive. Whoever remained too long in the cellar perished for sure.

You dear ones, what kind of a life is this? Has mankind deserved this? Is there yet no end to this misery? Nothing of yours remains, nothing at all. I have only my handbag. The trunks in the basement will in all likelihood never be seen again. The rubble of the entire building is lying on top of it. They say it's the worst attack so far. Last night they again destroyed the State and Kroll Opera Houses, the German Opera House, and the Schiller Theater, as well as all the linden trees. In our night also the KDW fell, the entire zoo; the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche burned out. Wertheim and Tietz[?], they say, are also no longer standing. A hell! Today there was again an alarm, but it went by fairly quietly. I would like to leave Berlin. At first, I wanted to go to Kohlow, but if, perish the thought, something has happened to my mother, then another person would be too many. I shall probably go to Höchst, even though that is also not a sure thing, but I'd really like to be with one of my children; perhaps Lisabeth will take me somewhere from there; after all, I am a bombed-out refugee.

You should find out what can be done on your behalf. People are given certificates, and they have to prepare a list of lost property. I don't know exactly how it works. What will become of our common existence? The Pachalis should inherit my furniture! Make no plans—Fashion no hopes; fate will decide.

My dears, faithful ones, including the beloved great-grandmother, I send you greetings from the bottom of my heart.

—The Good Mother

A couple of days after hearing about the bombing, Cornelia decided to travel to Berlin to see whether there was anything she could salvage from her cellar. I do not know what possessions she had there. I do not know whether she found anything much. When she arrived at the ruins of her house she found posted on the walls the information that one had to report to a certain office, in a school or town hall, to register as an individual or family who had been completely bombed out. There she would receive an identification card, as well as a sheet of paper, a certificate of bomb damage—*Bombenbeschädigungsausweis*—on which she was to list everyone who lived in her

apartment. This paper was to be presented to the police in whatever jurisdiction she moved to. It also entitled her to some clothes and furniture.

Every small district of the city had its own little police station, where information on every person who lived there or who had ever lived there was maintained. But these police stations were also bombed out, and so the police suddenly lost a degree of control. Berlin was in flames, and they had lost control over the movements of the citizenry. This loss of control turned out to be of great benefit to me. It saved my life.

Cornelia boarded the streetcar to go to register. In the train she met Gebbs, the brother-in-law of Erwin Kloth, who said to her, "Why don't you register Ruth as well, together with your family?" And that is what Cornelia did. She registered her mother, herself, the two children, and also a certain Rose Schwendinger. There was no way for the authorities to check easily the veracity of her claim.

A few days later, Cornelia returned to Bückeburg and told me the news. With these papers I was able to register with the police in Bückeburg. For the first time, I received ration cards. I think it was on my mother's birthday, November 29.

Having an official identity also made it possible for me to go to the hospital, but I didn't want to go, as I was very frightened. Pastor Mensching stated that there would be no problem getting me into the hospital. I said I wanted to talk to him. He came into my room but stayed by the door. "Please don't send me to the hospital," I said, and I wept. He told me that I did not have to go. What he didn't tell me, and it would have helped if he had (I learned about this later), is that his son had told him that unless I received a certain treatment, having the nerves and legs stimulated with electric current, I would remain paralyzed. And the longer it waited, the worse it would become. He did not tell me that.

In the end, I did go to the hospital. I was brought there in a wheelchair. I was upset and frightened. In the hospital I was in a room with two or three older peasant women. I was in constant panic. Every time the door opened I thought that my identity had been discovered. In retrospect, I realize that I was not in much danger. My roommates told me that I talked in my sleep every night. The first thing every morning I asked, "What did I say last night?"

The electric shock treatment was not painful, but afterwards, when I returned to the room, as soon as my head hit the pillow I had a feeling of falling as if from an enormous height. It was horrible. And so I would sit on the side of my bed, not wanting to lie down. My doctor was a

military doctor, ramrod straight, with white hair. I told him of this horrible sensation, but he didn't understand what was happening to me.

There were occasional air raids. Squadrons of planes flew overhead toward Hanover. Hanover was very badly destroyed. Although Bückeburg was not targeted, it was nonetheless terrifying for us. One didn't know whether a bomb might drop accidentally. So when the planes flew over, the beds were wheeled out into the corridors or into the cellar. We would remain crowded together for hours like pickled herrings. Nothing untoward ever happened while I was in hospital, but there was always a great commotion at night. Once, two bombs did fall in town, destroying two houses.

Cornelia occasionally came to visit me. The two women in my room in the hospital were very ill with cancer; I think they were dying. One day, one of the women was asking for water, but the nurses were too busy to get her a drink. Gradually, I was able to pull myself up and slowly make my way over to the sink to get her some water. Very gradually, as I was slowly able to take some steps, I was able to help these women a little bit.

Another Christmas approached. I had been in hiding almost a year. In the main hall stood a large tree; beds were arranged all around the walls. On Christmas eve, the nurses brought a small Christmas tree into every room. Ours had two candles, which the nurses lit. That Christmas had great significance for me. It was the first Christmas since my mother's death. The previous Christmas, I was still at home. On Christmas day I was able to walk through the door and look at the large Christmas tree. The nurses sang Christmas and Advent songs, and gave each of the patients a small gift, little things they had made themselves.

Sometime in January, I think it was near the end of the month, I was discharged, still in a wheelchair. Cornelia picked me up, and I went back to the Menschings. I was still very weak.

22.

As I gradually recovered, it became necessary for me to find a job. The country was in a state of total war, and everyone had to work, even the well-to-do who had never worked before. Not having a job would draw attention to me. Pastor Mensching was trying to find a situation for me where I could work without being too much exposed to the possibility of detection. First, he approached the two sisters who ran the home for wayward girls. These women were devoutly Christian, and they knew this pastor very well. Evidently, he told them who I was, because they replied that they could not offer me a place because to do so would involve them in falsehoods,

and that they could not accept. They would have to lie to the children, and that would constitute a bad example for them.

Eventually, Pastor Mensching found a place for me. It was at a small pharmaceutical factory run by the Hai family, one of the foremost families in town. The paterfamilias, Dr. Hai, was already an old man. He had been born poor, and his church had underwritten his medical education and then sent him to Africa as a missionary. There, he observed how easily the women gave birth. He decided that there must be something wrong with European women, so he studied these women's practices, and learned that they used particular herbs to give them strength. I believe he even wrote some books on the subject. He believed in these herbs, and on his return to Germany he started a small company to produce herbal elixirs based on his discoveries. One of these was called "strength drink." Another, called "uxorine," was for pregnant women.

In order to obtain extracts from the herbs, he needed alcohol, and also honey. The honey came from Russia, in large metal pails weighing fifteen or twenty pounds each. By the time the war came and goods were rationed, it was obvious that Dr. Hai had acquired sufficient connections, because he was able to obtain government rations of alcohol—which was otherwise unavailable—as well as honey and herbs.

The herbs were soaked, and then cooked in large kettles. When a kettle of elixir was ready to be bottled, the local farmers—men from the surrounding villages—would come to buy this preparation, for the alcohol content, no doubt. Sometimes, they would bring us eggs in trade. In this way I was sometimes able to obtain eggs, which I would bring to Cornelia. Once or twice, we employees were able to buy honey very cheaply. The Hais also produced a breakfast soup mix. But when they were no longer to obtain all the ingredients for its preparation, they discontinued the product. The remaining stock was sold at discount to the factory employees, and for months we ate this breakfast soup.

Dr. Hai had four, or perhaps five, sons. The oldest, Friedrich, ran the factory and the office. Two of the sons were doctors and another a pharmacist. Pastor Mensching knew that Friedrich Hai was opposed to the Nazis, and so he felt that I would be relatively safe working for him. He inquired of them, and learned that a clerk was needed; I applied for the job and was accepted. Now that I had a job in Bückeberg, I would have to find a place in Bückeberg to live, as Petzen was an hour's walk away. I asked Cornelia whether I might be able to live with her in their house in the Georgstrasse, but she replied that this would be impossible, because of the grandmother, who did

not like me. Cornelia suggested that I ask the Holsts. This was the family of Adolf Holst, the *Kalendermann*, whom Eva and I had visited.

The Holsts indeed had a room to let, and soon Rose Schwendinger moved into their house. It was an unheated room, and on winter mornings, when I washed myself from the bowl and pitcher in my room, I first had to break the layer of ice that had formed. But I was content. When Adolf Holst—he was actually Dr. Holst, I think—would run into me, on the stairs, say, he had a way of asking questions like, “Rose, are you related to such-and-such a Dr. Schwendinger?” Dr. Holst had been a teacher of Greek and Latin, and I loved to hear him speak ancient Greek. In order to fend off his probing questions, I would respond with, “Say something to me in Greek!”

Adolf Holst’s wife was from an aristocratic family. Their oldest daughter, Cordula, lived at home. She was a schoolteacher, and I had a good relationship with her. I took my meals at the *Pachalis* in the *Georgstrasse*. I gave Cornelia my ration cards, and we shared the shopping. I also helped out in the household as much as I could. It was difficult to obtain any necessity. Before work, I would stand in line for potatoes, or for coal or wood. Then Cornelia would come to take my place, and I would go to work. In the evening, after dinner, I went home to my unheated room. If it was particularly cold, the Holsts would invite me to sit with them in their living room. I didn’t care to do this, because I was under constant anxiety lest Dr. Holst ask one of his questions. Dr. Holst once said to me, “You know, I came by your room last night, and I heard you sigh and moan. It was so terrible, I almost went in. I thought you must be sick. I didn’t know what had happened to you.” I was talking in my sleep again. I couldn’t have begun to try to explain.

Rose Schwendinger’s lack of a past created difficulties at work as well. First of all, I had no work papers. I explained that I had been a music student and so hadn’t worked. This explanation was plausible, because I did have a musical background. In fact, one of Dr. Hai’s daughters-in-law must have heard me singing once in the bathroom, because she told everyone, “Yes, she sings like an angel.” And so they seem to have believed my story.

But to continue employment I needed to obtain a work papers. I filled out the requisite forms and sent them off to Berlin: name—Rose Schwendinger; date of birth—I don’t remember what day and year I gave. For four weeks I lay awake through sleepless nights of fright. What if they discovered that no Rose Schwendinger had ever been born in Berlin? The Germans documented everything and everyone. But because of the air raids, the bombing, the loss and destruction of documents, there was no way to check; and then one day in the mail, there it was: Rose Schwendinger’s work papers.

My coworkers in the office were for the most part Nazi sympathizers. There was one woman in particular, the bookkeeper. She was nice enough, I should add. Not all those who were Nazis were evil. They just preferred to remain ignorant. For one reason or another, especially in a small town like Bückeburg, most of the population thought it wonderful what the *Führer* was doing. They preferred not to look at the dark side of what was being wrought. All in all, I got along rather well with my coworkers.

I actually became rather friendly with the people with whom I worked. There were three or four of us in the office, and the same number in the factory. We all got along, and we worked together quite well. Not all of the workers were ardent Nazi supporters. Dr. Hai was still alive, and every day I brought the old man his midday meal. From time to time, when there was a special occasion, we would all be invited to the house for dinner, once, for instance, when one of his sons came home on furlough. His wife would then make a nice meal. They had access to food that we ordinary people did not, so it was always a special occasion when the whole group of us were invited for dinner.

The director of the factory was, as I have said, the doctor's oldest son, Friedrich. He was an ultranationalist, but nonetheless opposed to the Nazis. He was also virulently anti-Semitic. He once told about a family vacation to the islands in the North Sea. He was pleased to relate how if a Jew should appear in his hotel, the band would play, "*Bochum ist Judenrein*" to make the Jew so uncomfortable that he would leave.

One morning, there was great excitement at work. Something of note had occurred in town. My coworkers told me that there was now only one Jewish woman who lived in town, a young woman who was married to a baker, who was not Jewish. They had a baby, and the mother was still nursing. Nonetheless, the police picked her up for transport to the camps. In despair, she jumped into the Bückeburg Castle moat in an attempt to drown herself. But the fire brigade fished her out, and then they sent her away. When I heard this news I could scarcely restrain myself from showing the emotion I felt. I spent some time in the bathroom.

Another time I was told about a woman who had been arrested for hiding a young Jewish girl in her house. The girl had been arrested on a train to Switzerland. She was tortured to the point where she was no longer recognizable, during which she had revealed the name of this woman, who was then imprisoned. Her husband, an army officer, divorced her.

Dr. Holst's wife eventually became suspicious of me. She went to Frau Meyer, Cornelia's mother, and inquired whether there might perhaps be some Jewish blood in me, whether I was

perhaps not quite “Aryan.” Frau Meyer assured her that there was not a drop of Jewish blood in me whatsoever. After the war, Frau Holst reproached Frau Meyer for having lied to her.

I started in Dr. Hai’s pharmaceutical factory as a clerk. When the bookkeeper left, I took over her position. Not too long afterwards, Friedrich Hai’s secretary of many years left. It was obvious to all of us that she had also been his mistress. His wife knew all about the affair. Indeed, in our small town everybody knew about it. Perhaps the relationship had soured. I then became Friedrich Hai’s secretary. I hadn’t told anybody that I had acquired secretarial skills, but in fact, I was good at typing and taking shorthand.

One morning, I was in the bathroom, which had a window facing the back entrance, when out of this window I saw two men approaching, and I knew at once that they were from the Gestapo. I was sure that they were coming for me. Should I jump out of the window? I wondered. Impossible. That would have given me away. I pulled myself together and overcame my fear. I came out of the bathroom, and there were the Gestapo, interrogating each person in turn, asking whether our boss, Friedrich Hai, had spoken against the *Führer*. Apparently, someone had denounced Herr Hai to the secret police as an anti-Nazi. I, too, was interrogated. “No,” I said, “I have never heard any such remarks.” They never asked me for my papers. I was somehow able to suppress my panic and keep sufficiently calm so that they didn’t suspect anything. The Gestapo in Bückeburg were not of the caliber of those in a large city. The Gestapo in Berlin may have been looking for Jews. Here it was never suspected that a Jew might be living and working in their midst. Finally, Herr Hai was interrogated, and then the Gestapo left, taking him with them.

He was not sent to prison. He was, after all, a member of one of the most prominent families in the town. He was lucky. They could have done worse to him. He was, however, sent to the Netherlands to work digging trenches. The Normandy invasion had already taken place. What happened to him was humiliating, though, for a man in his position.

Friedrich Hai came home once on leave. In Bückeburg, he took the opportunity to take care of some of his business. He also invited all the people from the office to his house for dinner to celebrate his return. There must have been ten of us there. During the meal, he put forth the idea that I, as his secretary, should visit him on weekends in the town where he was working to bring him his mail and take dictation from him. When I heard this proposition, I blanched. I sat mute in my place, for I was deathly afraid. As Herr Hai had told us earlier, on every corner in this border town there were military patrols and checkpoints where you had to show your identity papers. I knew that to go there would have been the end of me. I suppose my reaction had an effect on him,

because he never made this suggestion again. I recall one of the women at the dinner; Frau Ziemer was her name. She also noticed my reaction and said to me, “Ach, Fräulein Schwendinger, I saw that when Herr Hai suggested that you visit him and bring the mail on the weekends you turned as white as the tablecloth. I understand. He has a bad reputation.” I made no reply. She patted me on the shoulder and told me again how much she sympathized with me.

He could have insisted. In the end, though, he must have realized that it was inappropriate to ask me to visit him. For one thing, travel was not encouraged. Everywhere were signs, “Don’t use the railroad! First the victory, then the journey.” The trains shouldn’t be filled with travelers on private business, but with troops and equipment in transit. Moreover, this Dutch border town was becoming more and more a locus of danger as the Allies advanced. Of course, we didn’t know a thing about the Allied advance, not a word. We heard nothing about what was transpiring on the western or eastern front; even when the armies were quite close, we didn’t know about it. My life would have been so much easier had I known. It would have given me some hope.

One threat that was always hanging over my head was that of being asked for my identity card, which, of course, I didn’t have. Everybody had to have one, and any policeman on the street had the right for any reason to ask a person to show this *Kennkarte*. Thanks to Cornelia, I shared with her and her family a *Bombenbeschädigungsausweis*—the certificate of having been bombed out that made it possible for me to register with the police and to obtain food ration cards. However, at the bottom of the form was the instruction that as soon as possible the persons listed therein were required to obtain a new *Kennkarte*. That is, the *Bombenbeschädigungsausweis* served only as a temporary replacement for the identity card. Since there was no way that I could establish my identity as Rose Schwendinger, I had never sought to obtain such a card.

Sooner or later, the lack of an identity card was going to get me in trouble. I was mulling over this problem, and eventually I came to the conclusion that it might be possible to obtain a postal identity card, which was a form of identification for establishing one’s address with the post office. I figured that an application for such a card might receive less scrutiny than one for a *Kennkarte*. The company where I worked mailed pharmaceutical preparations throughout Germany, and every day workers from the post office came to the factory and to the office to pick up and deliver mail. Thus the local postal workers saw me every day.

I decided to take the risk and apply for a postal identity card. I went first to a photo automat and had some pictures taken. Then I went to the post office and filled out the forms. I was frightened. What sort of identification checks would they run on me? I filed the form at the post

office and was told to return in three or four days. When I returned, the man behind the counter seemed suspicious. "How do I know that you are Rose Schwendinger?" he asked. I replied, "Check with the postal workers in the mail room. Some of them come every day to the factory where I work. They know me and can identify me." And so they did, and I obtained a card. It was not a *Kennkarte* and would have not have sufficed had the police become suspicious of me. But that never happened. I now had a card that stated officially that I was Rose Schwendinger, and that gave me a certain measure of confidence. That card, with its little photograph of me, survived the war. Two pictures were taken of me while I was in hiding. The one in Berlin, where I look quite unhappy, and the one in Bückeburg, which was a little better.

As Germany's situation worsened, refugees from Hanover and other cities that had been bombed, and from towns on the left side of the Rhein, were pouring into the smaller towns. Bückeburg became more and more crowded; what had been a town of about ten thousand swelled to double its prewar population. Residents of the town were compelled to take others into their houses. The authorities measured every square meter, and if you had more than your quota of space, you had to take someone in. This did not make for a great deal of happiness, living in such close quarters, sharing bathrooms and kitchens. There was inevitable conflict between long-time residents and newcomers. The former had resources unavailable to the refugees. This particular corner of Germany is not only very beautiful, but it has fruitful earth as well. Anyone who had a house, had a garden, and that garden had plum and cherry trees, currant and gooseberry bushes, and a vegetable plot.

At that time, nobody sold anything, and money was almost worthless. Sometimes, I would go alone or with Cornelia to one of the outlying villages to buy potatoes or turnips. We ate lots of turnips. We would mash them, add some spices, and spread the result on bread, pretending it was liverwurst. Turnips, turnips, turnips. In every shape and form we ate turnips. And potatoes. The ones we got from the farmers were frozen. They tasted sickly sweetish. But we were hungry, and we ate whatever we could get hold of. I remember how in the morning as I walked to work I would already be thinking about the slice of bread I would eat at noon.

It was particularly difficult toward the end, in 1944. There was very little food, especially if you had no connections, which we did not. If someone slaughtered a pig, it was done secretly, and those among the locals in the know might bring some silver or fine linens to the farmer and barter for a small piece of bacon. But refugees had no such contacts, and they did without.

One evening, it must have been in the fall of 1944, I returned to the Holsts after dinner with Cornelia and her family and was informed that an army officer had been there asking for me and that he would return on Saturday at noon. I was terribly frightened. I had sleepless nights all week, wondering who it could be. I certainly know no army officers, and how would he know where to go, and how would he know to ask for Rose Schwendinger?

On Saturday, at noon, there appeared the son of the former mayor of Bückeburg (who had been removed from office because he had refused to join the Nazi party). We went into a little-used room and spoke with lowered voices. The young officer told me that he was stationed in Wuppertal and had made the acquaintance of friends of the Jordans, who had given him my name and address. How they knew it, I do not know. The Jordans were now also living in hiding and wanted to send me greetings. He asked whether there was anything he could do for me or whether he could transmit any message to the Jordans. I was frightened and confused. I hadn't wanted *anyone* to know where I was and what name I was using. I thought it foolish and incautious of the Jordans to have given so much information to this officer. So I said merely, "Thank you, I don't need anything." I did ask him to send greetings to the Jordans.

After the war I ran into a man who had been my next-door neighbor in Berlin. He was a major in the army, and his wife had been evacuated to Bückeburg. He told me that once, when he was in Bückeburg on furlough from the front, he had seen me on the street. "I didn't speak to you," he said. "It would have been a terrific fright for you." So, I had been less safe in this little town than I had thought. I was two hundred miles from Berlin, but someone from Pragerstrasse 19—the house next door—had recognized me. Fortunately, they were good people. I knew this, but I would have been frightened nonetheless.

Toward the end of 1944 I received a card from the Youth Work Service—the *Arbeitsdienst*. This was the state office responsible for monitoring the obligatory year of work that all young people sixteen or seventeen years of age had to perform. For the boys this meant joining a paramilitary organization, and as the war progressed, these boys were then drafted into the army and sent to the Russian front. I know some who died there, including the youngest son of Wilhelm Mensching.

The *Arbeitsdienst* wanted to know where I had served during my obligatory year. There were forms to fill out, with many questions. And this was just a preliminary inquiry. Later, I would have to appear in person after receipt of subsequent notification. I answered the questions, stating that I was a student of music, for which reason I had been deferred from service. What choice did I

have? It was not a very convincing tale, and I was afraid of the consequences. Yet I never heard from them again. I suppose that so close to the end of the war, the officials were no longer able to keep up with every minuscule bureaucratic detail.

Another Christmas came. Christmas of 1944 was the second after my mother's death. At Christmastime I had a dream. I saw the church where Hitler had been installed with great pomp as chancellor of Germany. The church was burning; the spire was toppling down. This dream gave me hope. As hard as the time in Berlin had been, the time in Bückeburg was worse. In Berlin I lived among a supportive group of friends, and I didn't have to go out on the street. I remember once or twice in spring, in Berlin, I went out late at night with one of my friends, just to get some fresh air, and I remember how I stood at the entrance door to the house, afraid. One of those times, who should walk by but a man, a White Russian, who rented a room from my mother. What was *he* doing there? He didn't see me, fortunately. It was dark, completely dark because of the blackout. You stepped out of doors, and you didn't know whom you were going to meet. It was better to remain cooped up inside.

In Bückeburg, I cried myself to sleep almost every night. The town was lovely, and there were wonderful paths in the forests, and sometimes I would go for a walk. I lived in constant fear, but of course it was nothing at all like the unspeakable horror of being in a concentration camp. On the ninth of March Cornelia's older sister, Martha, arrived. She had recently married an SS officer and on his advice had just fled Berlin. He had told her that when the Russians were approaching she should flee. This was an indication to us that the end of the war was approaching. Martha realized, as she told me later, that Cornelia and I were good friends, and she made it her goal to drive a wedge between us. And in that she was very successful. I was henceforth excluded from the family. I was working and able to help in the household only in the evening and on weekends. Martha was there all day, and she and her sister did everything together. At the beginning of April rumors were rife that the Americans were approaching. Cornelia and Martha began to prepare the cellar, with beds and food. When I showed up to help, they locked themselves in the cellar, saying, "You can't come in until everything is ready."

We could hear the sound of artillery. There was fighting near Bückeburg. The Americans began to bombard the town. In spite of the shooting, we had to try to obtain food, which was getting more and more scarce, and there were constant rumors about where one might be able to obtain something to eat. One day, we heard that at the railroad station stood a tanker car with fruit juice for sale. Cornelia and I grabbed a pail and set out for the railroad station. There was a long

line, each person with a pail. Our turn came, and we filled our pail with juice. As we began the walk home, artillery shells came flying along the Bahnhofstrasse. We found ourselves in the vicinity of the house where Friedrich Hai lived. They had a cellar, we knew, where the family could hide. "We can't stay here on the street," I said. "Let's go to the Hais' cellar." They took us in, and we sat for an hour or so, waiting for the shelling to end. When the shooting stopped we emerged from the cellar and resumed our walk home. Just at the place we would have been, had we proceeded, there was a large crater. We arrived home with our pail of juice.

There was more and more shooting. I became sick with the flu and could not go to work. Cornelia suggested that I move in with her. At first, I rejected her proposal, but then I thought that when the Americans came, I could be protection for them, since I could say that Cornelia and her family had been hiding and assisting me. So I moved into the house in the Georgstrasse. Two or three days later, when I returned to the room at the Holsts where I had lived, I found the windows broken from the air pressure of the artillery, my bed covered with splinters of glass.

We learned that Bückeburg had capitulated, despite orders to fight to the last man—including old men and boys; even small boys were given hand grenades to throw at the tanks. But instead, everyone put out a white flag and surrendered. It was a Sunday morning, the eighth of April.

Then we went into the cellar. The American troops marched in, and I tiptoed upstairs. I peeked through the curtains at the approaching soldiers. They looked very grim and dirty. For me—I shall never forget it—for me, it was the end of the nightmare.

Those with whom I was living with were not so pleased to see the American troops. For those who had supported Hitler, there would be trouble. The lady who owned the house, Frau von Hinüber, had a son who was a mayor in a small town. He committed suicide at the end of the war. Actually, nothing much happened even to prominent Nazis. The residents of the house at Georgstrasse 3a were mostly women of what had once been the minor aristocracy of the former state of Schaumburg-Lippe, most of whom had supported Hitler. One of these women—only one—much later, when everything about me became known, came up to me and shook my hand and said, "I'm glad you made it."

